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The
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THE BETTER PART

A Story of Love and Service

BY
MARIETTA SMITH

ILLUSTRATED

1918

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HIS FAVORITE FISHING PLACE.

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Dedicated
To Our Soldier Boys.

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By Marietta Smith, Atchison, Kansas.

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The Better Part

A STORY OF LOVE AND SERVICE.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD TIDINGS.

Within was a beautiful home; without, the wind stirred the leaves of the magolia trees and the tiny leaves of the Virginia creeper played hide and seek around the edges of the upper windows. The mocking-bird sang sweetly all unheard by those within, for their ears were filled with a sweeter, dearer sound—the cry of a new-born babe.

The heart of Dr. Preston overflowed with love and gratitude, when the nurse said, “A boy, though a weakly little thing,” and he tenderly kissed the mother, whose eyes shown with love and gratitude that her wish had been granted, and a son had been given to her, to train and educate to carry on the work of the Master, in whose cause she had always been deeply interested. Other children had come into that home—grown up and gone to homes of their own. Many years had passed since little feet had pattered through the quiet rooms of that grand old southern home, and now their cup of joy was full to the brim, as they fondly gazed on the child of their old age. Dr. Preston had grown gray in the service of his fellow-men, and, although he was several years older than his wife, in her hair silver threads were appearing among the gold.

As they looked at the little one, they were filled with hope for his future; and as he grew from babyhood to early manhood they gave him much loving care, for he was always a

frail child. Often his life was despaired of, and only the skill of his father, and the loving care of his mother kept him from passing to that bourne from which no traveler returns.

He entered school at an early age to begin preparation for his life work—that of winning souls to Christ. He was attentive and studious during the many years of his school life and at last the time came when he was to graduate from the Seminary and return home for a short visit before entering his chosen profession—the ministry. His mother went about giving a loving touch to everything about the house, for was not Walter coming today? His father, now retired from the practice of medicine, waited eagerly for the time when he should drive to the station to meet his long absent son.

What a joyful moment it was in that home when, as an ordained minister of the gospel, their best loved son gave thanks at the table and led in family worship; and how they enjoyed the long drives around the home town, pointing out to Walter the many changes that had taken place during his absence. They knew he must soon leave them again and go about the “King’s Business.” He had been promised a call from a western state.

One day he went to his favorite fishing place on a rippling brook, where as a boy he had spent many happy hours swimming and catching sun perch. Forgetting for a time his high calling, he took off his shoes, waded out to a large rock in the middle of the stream and cast out his line. Such good luck attended him that time passed rapidly and he was intent only on baiting his hook for more fish.

The sun shone hot on the water, but a large straw hat protected his face, although his bare feet on the rock were becoming a beautiful pink. The sound of a coming carriage reached his ears, and, looking up, he saw his father coming toward him holding in his hand a yellow envelope, which instantly called to his mind that he was a fisher of men. On opening the envelope, he found it to contain a telegram from a western man, asking him to come at once and take charge of a splendid little church in Illinois, and this was what brought his father out in the heat and dust to find him.

Upon arising the next morning, our young minister found that his feet were blistered, but, being compelled to go to his

charge, he procured a pair of carpet slippers and packed his shoes in his grip, remembering, as he bade his father good-bye at the station, that "Blessed are the feet of them that bring good tidings of great joy."

A very weary and dust covered young man alighted when the train rolled into the station. His youthful, almost feminine appearance astonished Deacon Algood, who was waiting to welcome him and take him to his own home, where his good wife was preparing a meal fit for a king for the new minister.

After introducing himself as Walter Preston, and remarking that he was pleased to receive the call as their minister, he explained the necessity for his wearing carpet slippers. The good deacon was all sympathy, and hurried home, where, after a motherly welcome from Mrs. Algood, he removed his slippers, bathing his feet in cool water, while Mrs. Algood insisted on applying such simple remedies as she had at hand—sweet cream and baking soda.

After partaking of the excellent supper which Mrs. Algood had prepared, the deacon and his wife conversed with the young minister of the church and its needs, and were delighted that he so understood them. They offered him a home with them, which he gladly accepted.

Being very tired, he retired early, and while he was sleeping and dreaming of his new charge, the deacon and his wife talked until far into the night, wondering how the young minister would take with the congregation. In appearance he was a mere boy, and his light hair, blue eyes and fair complexion made him appear several years younger than he was in reality—he being but twenty-two years of age. However, the president of the Bible College had recommended him as a man of winning personality and a fine speaker, so the call had been extended. The good deacon and his wife were reminded of the lateness of the hour by the hall clock striking the midnight hour. The deacon read a chapter from the Bible and offered a prayer asking the Heavenly Father to help them to do all in their power to make the church all that it should be, and that the new minister might do a great work among them.

Sunday morning dawned one of the fairest of days, and very fair indeed it seemed to Walter Preston, as, in company

with Deacon Algood, he went to the church to meet the people who came in crowds to worship and hear the new minister's first sermon. Some of them could not hide their disappointment when they were introduced to a "mere boy," and the faces of the elders, always solemn, grew more so.

His feet were yet very tender and his shoes uncomfortably snug, but Walter Preston had a smile and a bright, cheery word for all as he took his place in the pulpit, facing the large and expectant congregation. After the opening prayer, he arose to read his text. The fact that all eyes were centered on him, as well as the pain his feet were giving him, caused him to be seized with fear, and trembling greatly, he opened his Bible and read, "Blistered are the feet of them who bring good tidings." The deacon and his wife groaned in spirit, for they were the only ones who knew of his temporary affliction. Several young people in the back of the church began to giggle, but when a pretty brown-eyed girl quickly frowned and plainly showed her disapproval, they instantly became quiet and listened with growing attention to the eloquent sermon which followed the slight mistake of the text. The theme of brotherly love found a resting-place in their hearts, and such handshaking and sweet fellowship followed the close of the service. All were loud in their praise of the sermon, and went away feeling a desire to make the stay of Walter Preston among them both pleasant and profitable.

No one was more interested in the work of the church than pretty brown eyed Anna Chester. Her singing in the choir was not only helpful, but pleasing to the young pastor, who no doubt felt grateful to her for quieting the mirth of the young people, and overlooking the mistake in the reading of the scripture taken for his text in his first sermon. She was beloved by all in the village, and it did not surprise those who had known and loved her from babyhood to find that the minister was very much in love with her before a year had passed. At the sewing society, where the latest news was duly discussed, it was said that these two young people were admirably suited to each other. Sister Algood said "that Anna was by nature intended for a preacher's wife," and when her aunt, who was present, told them that Anna was already "promised," there was general rejoicing, and

each felt proud that one of their girls had been chosen for a wife by the splendid young minister, whom they had all learned to love. Life just then was very fair and promising to the young couple. Her parents were well pleased, and his own gladly consented to his early marriage.

Rev. Preston spent his first vacation visiting friends in Kansas. While there, he preached twice, and was so well liked by the congregation that they thought he would be the one to lead them to higher things and help build the new church, for which they were planning, so they decided to extend a call to him.

As it was an advance in salary and a splendid field for a young man, he accepted the call, but great was the disappointment of the congregation at Bloomton when they learned they must give him up.

He could not be persuaded to stay, so they gave him a farewell reception, presenting him with a gold watch, and bade him Godspeed, and all prayed earnestly for his success in his new field.

Walter Preston's heart was saddened by the thought of leaving, for he did not realize how much they cared for him and he for them until he was ready to bid them good-by. But the thought that Anna Chester was willing to go with him and share his work comforted him. It was decided that he should return at Christmas time for his bride, so bidding farewell to all, he departed for his new field.

Anna, impressed with the responsibility of becoming a minister's wife, began to prepare her household linen, and to study her music more diligently. It was a real joy to attend the sewing society, for the ladies were making a nice quilt for Anna, and all their names were to be placed on it.

CHAPTER II.

BUILDING A CHURCH.

There were no more Christ-like people anywhere than those who comprised the congregation found at Ashton, when Rev. Walter Preston took charge. Their hearts overflowed with love for one another. They welcomed the new pastor as their brother and leader, and received the news of his coming marriage with gladness, for they wished him to remain with them, and felt that he would be more apt to do so if he were married, and would be more successful in the work.

Though meeting in a hall, great crowds came to hear the ever new story of Christ and His love, as told by the new minister. Rev. Preston was invited to make his home with Elder Peyton, and he was pleased to do so until a time when he should bring his bride and go to a home of his own. They treated him as their own son, and ever afterwards he referred to them as his second father and mother. He spent much time getting acquainted with the people outside, as well as within the church, and was well liked by all. When he returned with his bride at Christmas time, they found a cordial welcome awaiting them, also a number of useful and beautiful gifts. The good will and kindness of all recalled to his mind the time when the wise men came worshipping and bringing their gifts to the Babe in Bethlehem, who came to bring "Peace on earth, good will to men."

Elder Peyton and his wife begged the minister to continue to make his home with them (for they were well pleased with his wife) so the young couple lived there for some time, and a very happy family it was.

Surely no man ever undertook the building of a church under better conditions than did Rev. Walter Preston, and no one ever worked and preached more earnestly than he. The love and kindness of his people gave him strength to labor almost night and day.

When funds ran low, he lectured in other towns, and gave the proceeds to the building fund. He gave much of his salary to the church, and with his own hands helped to lift the heavy timbers in place, with a strength not his own. His weight did not exceed 130 pounds, and it was a source of

great regret to him that he was not large and strong, that he might have more strength to use in the Master's work. Much of the work on the new church was being done free by stone masons and carpenters—some of whom were not members of the church, but were glad to assist. Oftentimes they were forced to quit work for lack of material, and many sacrifices were made and much self-denial practiced; but they counted it all joy, so great was their love for Christ and the unsaved in their midst. It was truthfully said of them that they found it "More blessed to give than to receive," excepting when some gift was received for the new church.

Mrs. Preston was not idle all this time. She was visiting the sick, and using her beautiful, well trained soprano voice in singing sweet songs at every service, endearing herself to the people; and her presence was ever an inspiration to her husband.

It was not long until such faithful work by pastor and congregation was rewarded, and donations came from unexpected sources.

The hall where services were held was only one block from the new church site, and they saw each Lord's day when they came to worship, the walls of the church rising higher and higher. Finally a well-built, handsome church stood completed and ready for use, to be dedicated to the work of Christ.

As they looked upon the new church, all their trials and troubles faded away, and they were filled with a feeling of thankfulness that God had so prospered them in their undertaking. Judge Latham, one of the elders, and one of the most helpful through all the past days, presented them with a silver communion service, for use in the new church. A fine organ was sent by an unknown friend. A happier people could not be found than those assembled the day of the dedication. A debt of one thousand dollars still remained to be paid, but they were sure that it would be no burden to them. They had Christ for their leader, and were ready to follow where He might lead.

Not long after the church was finished and plans for a great meeting were maturing, a mantle of sorrow overspread the entire congregation, caused by the sickening of the aged parents of their beloved pastor. On their behalf the church

in the old home town extended him a call to become their minister. His father and mother begged him to return, for they wished him to be near them during the short time they knew was theirs on earth. Rev. Preston accepted the call, and to soften the sorrow of his people in Ashton, he promised that some time in the future he would return to serve them and the church he loved so well.

CHAPTER III.

CHARITY TEMPLETON.

The voice singing was that of a noted tenor soloist, and leader of song in the revival meetings held in the new church lately built by the Christian people of Ashton. As the song ended, the earnest evangelist said, "Is there not one more who will come now and let Christ be his Shepherd, 'For they that follow Me shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of my hand,' " saith the Lord Jesus.

A pale, sweet-faced girl came forward. He took her hand, saying, "God will bless you for taking this step," as he took her confession. She was very fair. Her head was crowned with a mass of beautiful golden-brown hair, and her eyes were blue-gray.

Such was Charity Templeton, as we see her for the first time. Her mother died when she was fourteen years old, leaving to her care a baby brother. The mother's last words to Charity were, "Take care of Arthur and be a good girl."

Never was there a better daughter to her grief stricken father. She gave up school and assumed all care of Baby Arthur and the household. Her father was not very strong, for he suffered from the effects of a wound received during the Civil War. He had served three years as captain of a company of splendid men, most of whom had been friends of his boyhood. His health finally became so poor that he was obliged to retire from business, leaving his affairs in the hands of his trusted partner, who, owing to the extravagant ways of his wife, who was very fond of society, and, in order that she might entertain her wealthy friends in her home, he embezzled most of the money that came in, and, by making false entries, everything appeared all right. Captain Templeton never thought of questioning his honesty, but a friend who knew of their extravagant mode of living, persuaded him to investigate. The guilty man threw himself at the Captain's feet, and begged for mercy, saying that if nothing was said about the affair, he would spend the balance of his days to repay him.

Captain Templeton granted the privilege, and the facts were not told. Whether from a sense of guilt, or from overwork in trying to keep up the expenses of his family, the unfortunate man was stricken with a fever and lived only a few days.

The loss of his money was a great blow to Captain Templeton, for he knew he must soon leave Charity and Arthur alone in the world, with barely enough to keep them and educate Arthur. Charity tried to cheer him, saying she could do all the housework, and manage things so they would never come to want, until Arthur's education was finished, and he would be able to take charge. It was not long until her father's sudden death left Charity to care for herself and Arthur as best she could. Charity missed her father greatly, but looked to her Heavenly Father for comfort and guidance. Her father left a fine library, and all her spare time was devoted to study, that she might be of more help to Arthur, who was now in school. She possessed a remarkable talent for drawing which she cultivated, and was able to help pay expenses by teaching a class in drawing and painting. She loved the church, and the people, and was never so happy as when she was helping in some church work. No call for service was ever refused by her, whether it was to toil over a hot stove preparing a dinner to help pay the pastor's salary, or teach the dear, but restless, little ones in the Sunday School.

CHAPTER IV.

SISTER TRIGSBY.

The strains of "Turkey in the Straw" on a violin was accompanied by the tones of a wheezy old organ. Torches lighted up the platform of the new park of Ashton. A dance was being given in honor of the opening of the park, which lasted far into the "wee small hours."

Among those who never seemed to tire, and were seen in every set, was Sister Macum, whose snapping black eyes gave almost as much light as the dim torches temporarily placed among the trees around the platform.

The name "Sister" was the only one given her. She was the baby and only girl in the home of widow Macum. When she was just learning to walk and talk, such commands from mother as "Give Sister your top," or "Give her those marbles this minute," or "Don't you dare to cross Sister," caused the neighbors to take up the name "Sister." She always had her way in everything. While her mother worked, she slept the day following the dance at the park, and was ready when evening came, to attend a party given in honor of a friend's birthday. While she was arranging her hair, her brother came in from his work as an apprentice at the foundry. He remonstrated with her, saying, "It does look like you would stop dancing long enough to sleep and eat." "I would rather dance than eat any old time," she said, and, seeing her best beau, George Trigsby, coming in at the gate, she grabbed her pink ice wool fascinator and, calling, "Don't come in, we will be late," she vanished, leaving the boys and her mother to their never ending argument concerning her approaching marriage to young Trigsby. "You know she will never get along with him," her eldest brother said, to which his mother replied, "Oh, well, she wants him, and I will not object."

In due time, young Trigsby became the husband of Sister Macum. As she had never done any housework, and the thought of it was displeasing to her, they made their home with her mother. After two years of great unhappiness for both, they drifted apart and George Trigsby found work in another city, where he was taken seriously ill. He grew

worse rapidly, but in his conscious moments, he begged them to send for his wife. The word was sent at once, but she refused to come. When told by the physician that the end was near, he asked them again to send for his wife, saying that he wished to see her once more before he died. So unforgiving was her nature that she again refused to go to her husband. He died alone, save for the strangers who so kindly cared for him, and gave him a Christian burial.

Not long after young Trigby's death, the widow Macum inherited a considerable amount of money, and her days of hard work ended. She found herself possessed of a great deal of spare time, and concluded to return to the church. After much persuasion, Sister Trigsby went with her mother. The congregation were glad to receive the mother back again, and Sister Trigsby decided that she would unite with the church. When she learned that the Church Board wished to borrow some money, she persuaded her mother to loan them the amount at good interest, the principal to be paid at no definite date.

Socially, they arose in the eyes of the official board, who did not know of Sister Trigsby's burning desire to rule. People accepted her mother's story that she married a drunkard and at his death decided to devote the remainder of her life to church work. They felt sorry for her, and, learning that she knew something of music, they invited her to play the organ. She insisted that the choir meet at her home for practice, which they did. She next took charge of the affairs of the young people, including their courtships. If there was to be a social, she had it held at her home, and those who knew the family said that the best cakes were set aside, and they had cake on the table for several days after.

Before Sister Trigsby united with the church, the Junior Endeavor Society had adopted an orphan in India, for whose education they agreed to pay a stated sum each year. The president of the society, Miss Ethel Bellew, wished the orphan to be given the name of the pastor's wife, but Sister Trigsby, who wanted to rule in all things, managed to have the little orphan given her name.

About this time, Bro. Smith was called as a missionary to Cuba, leaving the Ashton church without a pastor. Bro. Preston's parents had died, and he wished to come back to

his former charge. All the old members were greatly rejoiced at the thought of having him with them, and gladly welcomed him back.

When Bro. Preston returned, after an absence of several years, he found great changes had taken place in the congregation. Some had died, some had moved away, the children had grown up—but the most disappointing thing of all was that the mortgage still hung over the church. He decided that the mortgage *must be lifted*. Under his leadership, they renewed their efforts to clear the church of debt.

CHAPTER V.

THE POOR WIDOW.

There was great joy in the hearts of the members of the Sunshine Circle when their part of the money to pay off the mortgage was safely deposited in the First National Bank of Ashton. A nice little sum yet remained in the treasury, and Sister Trigsby suggested that a silkaline comfort be made and presented to Mrs. Preston, with the compliments of the Sunshine Circle, as a nice way to end their year's work. The ladies met at the home of Sister Trigsby and made the comfort. Sister Trigsby sent it by a special messenger to Mrs. Preston, with a card bearing her name.

A few days after this, Charity called on her dear friend, Mrs. Hulings, and found her very sad. Her next door neighbor had been over and told her that Mrs. Wilson, a poor widow who worked for her, had sent word that her five months old baby had pneumonia, and the doctor had forbidden her to do any more washing for a time, as the steam was not good for the child. She depended on what she earned at the tub to support herself and three children, the oldest being but eight years of age. Her husband had been killed less than a year before in a western town, while defending an orphan boy, who was being abused by a drunken man. She was left almost penniless, among strangers, a short time before the birth of the baby. She was a brave little woman, and a good mother; she returned to Ashton, where she owned a small two room house, and resolved to keep her children with her.

As the two friends talked of the widow's sad condition, they wondered if she had bed clothing sufficient to keep them warm. Charity said, "I think our ladies of the Circle would be glad to make and give her some warm comforts." "How kind of you to think of it, I am sure they would," said Mrs. Hulings. "Didn't you see the one they gave to Mrs. Preston? It certainly was a beauty." Charity could have no peace of mind until she called on the President of the Circle, and related the sad story of Mrs. Wilson. The President thought it the very thing to do, and said that at their next

meeting she would suggest that the proceeds of their last social should be given to the widow as a thank offering. It was near that time of the year, and it would be a nice way to end the most prosperous year in the history of the Sunshine Circle. Charity went home with a glad heart, thinking what a pleasant surprise it would be for Mrs. Wilson.

On her way to town a few days later, she met Sister Trigsby and told her of the proposed plan to help Mrs. Wilson, thinking she would be only too glad to assist in the good work. Charity was greatly astonished when Sister Trigsby said, with a look of displeasure on her face, "It won't do at all." "Why," said Charity, "it is the very thing we should be interested in—to help the widows and orphans, and she certainly needs help just now." Sister Trigsby tightened her lips—a way she had when someone suggested something which did not happen to meet with her approval. "Well, it will not do at all, it might make Mrs. Briggs angry," and without another word she passed on, leaving Charity to wonder why an act of kindness should offend the only living relative of Mrs. Wilson's husband. Mrs. Briggs was his sister, and did all she could to lighten the burden of care which had so suddenly fallen on the young mother. Charity had met her at the Circle, and liked her pleasant ways, and had been told what great friends she and Sister Trigsby had been for many years. Since her brother's tragic death, Mrs. Briggs had not attended church or the Circle meetings. This fact, together with the thought that surely a gift of money in the Master's name should not offend her, caused Charity to call on Mrs. Briggs and tell her of the good intentions of the women. She found Mrs. Briggs sewing on a dress for her oldest daughter, which made it easy to talk to her of her brother's family. In a nice way, Charity told her of the plan of the Circle to help them through the baby's illness.

Mrs. Briggs burst into tears, and it was some time before she became quiet enough to talk. Charity tried hard to keep her own tears back, and frequently was overcome with emotion. Finally, between great sobs, Mrs. Briggs said, "I do think it is very kind of them, and she will appreciate it, but not more than I, for I thought they had forgotten me in my time of trouble. It will be received in the spirit in which it is given, for it is a Christian act; and I am so glad, for it

renews my faith in them who had almost caused me to believe that there were no Christians, as 'actions speak louder than words.' I was one of the charter members of the church, and, having no relatives except my one dear brother, I always thought that should troubles come to me my friends in the church would be a great help to me with their kind words and sympathy, but"—a fresh burst of tears, which it seemed to the now thoroughly astonished Charity never would cease—"that is where I was mistaken, for they never came near, nor asked how we were, and but a very few attended the funeral of my dear and only brother. The railroad men could not have been kinder, and the people of the town tried in every way to make our sorrow lighter, but the great call of my heart was unanswered. Why did not some of my friends in the church write a letter or send a word of sympathy? The way Sister Trigsby treated me hurt me most of all, for she had always said she loved me as a sister, and I believed her, and was always glad to do what she asked me to do in the days now past and gone forever. I can't describe my feelings when the train came into the depot, and she was not there to meet me. I never knew how it felt to be all alone before. All my blessed friendships are shattered through no fault of mine. More than a week had passed when one day someone knocked at my door. I answered, and there was Sister Trigsby and her mother. Both said at once, 'Oh, how sorry we feel that you have had such great trouble,' and Sister Trigsby attempted to kiss me. I stepped back and said, 'You hypocrites, to come now, after so long a time, and say you are sorry. I don't believe it. You were having too good a time at the Christmas bazaar to attend my brother's funeral, or send a word of sympathy. Don't you ever say you are my friend again.' Mrs. Trigsby leaned heavily on her mother, saying, 'Take me away, Mamma, take me away!' Since then not one of my old church friends has ever called on me, not even Brother Preston. They care for us only when we can give them money."

Charity arose to depart, fully understanding Sister Trigsby's reason for opposing the plan to help Mrs. Wilson, and, feeling that this kindness would restore some of the old feeling to the heart of Mrs. Briggs, was glad she had thought of and proposed it. She resolved in her mind that hereafter,

she would have more concern for those in sorrow. As followers of Jesus, we must not neglect those who have lost their loved ones by death, putting aside all pleasure, or leave other church work undone to minister at such times.

But a short time remained for the last social of the year. Charity received a call from the President of the Circle one day, who informed her that they had given up the idea of giving the proceeds of the social to Mrs. Wilson. When asked why she had changed her mind, she said Mrs. Macum had spent the afternoon with her the day before, and had discouraged the plan by telling of the great numbers of times that the Circle had gotten into trouble in the past by doing just such things. On that account, she had decided not to mention it at the next meeting—that she would be afraid to take anything to Mrs. Wilson if it should be left at her house, for fear of offending Mrs. Briggs, who, Mrs. Macum had told her, was very high tempered, and was already mad at all the church people. Mrs. Macum said if Mrs. Wilson got badly in want, they would give a pound party for her, and then maybe Mrs. Briggs would swallow her pride and come down off of her “high-horse.”

Charity was speechless with indignation at the clever way in which Mrs. Macum had spoiled their plan for helping the poor woman. She wondered what her dear friend, Mrs. Huling, would think about it, and thought what a sad blow it would be to the renewed faith of Mrs. Briggs.

At last, with such a look on her face such as the President never saw there before, Charity said, “Well, I must say you are a pretty Christian.”

That same evening, Charity visited Mrs. Huling, and explained the change in the President’s mind, saying, “We will have to give it up and think of some other way to help her.” “We can’t,” said Mrs. Huling. “We can’t. So many have offered to help, and my neighbor is going to ask her Catholic friends to help. What can we say to them—that our Christian women refuse to help a poor widow? I never did like Sister Trigsby’s way of running everything, anyway. They gave Mrs. Preston a nice present, and they shall do as much for Mrs. Wilson. I am from Missouri, and they will have to show me. If the President won’t mention it in

the Circle, *I will*. Sister Trigsby can't run me. Are you willing to help? If you don't, you are no Christian."

Charity said she felt it would make trouble, if they opposed anything suggested by Sister Trigsby, or her mother, but she thought it was right to go ahead and help the orphans, and receive the reward of the Heavenly Father.

When the Circle met, no reference was made to the plan of assisting Mrs. Wilson. Mrs. Huling had quietly arranged with the members who wished to help that if the President did not mention it, she would make a motion to hold a social, or give a supper, and give the proceeds to Mrs. Wilson. So, with wildly beating hearts, they waited their opportunity. All business was finished, and refreshments, consisting of cake and coffee, for which the ladies always paid ten cents, were ready in Sister Corwin's pretty home-like dining room. Mrs. Macum came in, saying, "The coffee is ready ladies, so hurry out." Then, Mrs. Huling arose and said: "Ladies, there is something I wish to bring before you," and in a low, distinct voice, she told them of the sad need of Mrs. Wilson and her children. Many of them had heard of it before, and their eyes filled with tears, and their hearts overflowed with sympathy. "Now, ladies, I am going to make a motion that our Circle give a social or dinner for her benefit." So eager were they to assist in such a good cause that instantly there were several seconds to the motion, and, when the vote was taken, all favored it with the exception of the President and Sister Trigsby, who sat with a look of genuine surprise on their faces. Mrs. Macum, who was already standing, seeing the turn affairs had taken, took hold of her apron, and waving it at them, said, "Shoo, shoo, if you don't go right now, your coffee will be cold." Someone said, "Just let it cool, we intend to stay right here until this matter is settled."

In a few moments all arrangements were completed, except the time and place of holding it. Sister Trigsby, having recovered from her astonishment, said, "I should like to know where you ladies intend to hold your social, you can't have the church, and where will you get a house?" She knew that many of them lived in small cottages. Dear old Sister Corwin said, "Right here, you can have my house, and I will do all I can to help, for I am so sorry for her, the poor dear."

They were all ready to do something with the exception of the President, Mrs. Macum and Sister Trigsby.

The principal of the large ward school near Charity's home, asked the privilege of soliciting the teachers, and a neat sum was given, which she gave to Charity with expressions of sympathy.

One good woman gave a turkey and celery enough to supply the tables, if they should decide to serve a dinner.

Mrs. Macum was not idle in trying to defeat their purpose. She went around making remarks about them, saying, "The very idea of such poor folks helping the poor." She went to see Rev. Preston, and told him of the plan, saying, "Mrs. Wilson is in good circumstances, and does not need anything, but Charity and Mrs. Huling are doing it only for spite, as they hope to break up the Circle."

The next Sunday, when Charity approached Mrs. Preston, with the intention of telling her the plan to serve a supper in the basement of the church, and to ask that Bro. Preston announce it at the evening service, she said, "Sister Preston, I wished to say that"—she stopped short, for Sister Trigsby, without even speaking to her, took hold of Mrs. Preston's arm, saying, "Excuse me, Sister Preston, I must speak to you a minute." Taking her by the arm, she led her aside, leaving Charity with the unfinished sentence on her lips.

She waited until their conversation was ended, when she again approached Mrs. Preston, and told her of the plan for the dinner. Charity was much surprised at the indifference of Mrs. Preston, who said, "Oh, can't you postpone it, or get a private house. I am afraid it will make too much going on at the church." She did not say that she would tell Mr. Preston. Mrs. Menton overheard what Mrs. Preston said to Charity, and knew it was some of Sister Trigsby's work. She told Mr. Preston about it, and said if they did not let them have the church, they would announce it in the daily paper. He was much disturbed, and said they should have the church, and he and his wife would do all they could. He said he would make the announcements when they were ready.

Charity did not go to church that evening, so Rev. Preston wrote her a note, which Mrs. Menton promised to deliver

early the next morning; but she put it in the Hymn Book and forgot all about it.

A few days later, Charity met Mr. Scalem, the treasurer. After the usual greeting, he said, "I hear you and some others think of giving a dinner for the benefit of Mrs. Wilson. Now, that is a nice thing to do, but if I were you I would not make it a church affair." Whereupon, Charity explained that nothing was asked of the church people, as she knew paying the mortgage was a great burden to them. Bro. Scalem put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a ten cent piece, which he gave to Charity, who silently received it, mentally calling it the widow's mite, for she knew he had given one hundred dollars toward paying off the mortgage. "How true it is," she murmured, "'The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not!'"

The next one to discourage her was the President of the Circle, who said, "They ought to hold their social at the home of Mrs. Wilson, as no one would care to go anyway," and, if she were they, she would not say that the ladies of the church had anything to do with it. This was the last straw, and Charity began to think their work was all in vain.

On her way home, she called at the home of Mrs. Tindall, whose husband was foreman of the big railroad shops. He persuaded her to give up the idea of a dinner, and call on the business men, assuring her that he would see all the men in his employ. Charity decided to accept his advice to ask the editor of the Ashton Daily News, who was not a member of any church, for a donation. Although the son of a Methodist minister, Mr. Watson was noted for his unbelief, also for his willingness to assist the poor.

Charity had some trouble in persuading Mrs. Huling to agree to giving up the plan for the dinner, but she finally consented, and, early the next morning, she and Charity started for the office of the Daily News, intending to ask the editor for a donation, and to mention the case of Mrs. Wilson, so, when the committee called on the business men, they would know that the case was one worthy of their sympathy.

As the two friends went on their way, they felt greatly humiliated at being forced to turn from those who should hear the cry of the orphan, to ask help of an unbeliever. "I

wonder what he would say if he knew how we happened to come to him for help," said Mrs. Huling.

Just then they saw Rev. Preston coming up the street. "Oh," said Mrs. Huling, "here comes Bro. Preston, what shall we do?" "Why, speak to him of course," said Charity, "we are not angry with anyone, only disappointed." After greeting them, he stopped in front of them, barring their way, and said, "Where are you ladies going?" Charity, ignorant of the story that had been told him, and not wishing to explain their errand, said, "Oh, we are just going out to do some good, kind act," and attempted to pass on. He did not move, but said, "I should like to know *where* you are going." "Well," said Charity, "if you must know, we are going down to the News office." Rev. Preston became greatly excited, and said, "Now, Sister Templeton, that is all spite work," and in his excitement he took hold of Charity's arm. "Surely," he said, "you are not going to say anything about the church; you must do as I say."

For a minute, Charity could not believe her own ears, and thought that even Bro. Preston did not want them to get money for the poor widow. Why did he change his mind, when he had told them only a few days before that it was all right, and he wanted to help, too. Charity tried to explain, but he would not listen, becoming more and more excited. She tried to release her arm, but he kept hold of her, saying, "You *shall* do as I say. You know I told you in the first place not to make it a church affair."

Charity lost all patience, and said very earnestly. "Well, Brother Preston, I did think if there were any good people on earth it was you and Sister Preston, but when a preacher gets so wrapped up in burning a mortgage that he does not want a social given in the church for the benefit of a poor widow and her little ones, he not only ought to burn the mortgage, but the church also, for the people do not need it. If good people like you will not help me, where will I go for help, if not to Mr. Watson, and to him I am going."

With an effort, Charity freed her arm, and, turning, saw Mr. Watson approaching, drawn by the crowd which had gathered to listen to Rev. Preston and Charity. When Rev. Preston saw the editor approaching, he hurriedly departed.

Greatly excited, Charity rushed up to Mr. Watson and poured forth her story almost incoherently. Mr. Watson listened politely and patiently. When she had finished, he very calmly said, "Now, what is it you wish me to do? If you wish to give the dinner, I will secure a hall free of charge, and print anything you wish. I am sure you are right, and the people will think so, too. You may have the whole paper if you want it. The News is yours."

Mrs. Huling afterward said, in telling of the nice manner in which Mr. Watson talked to Charity, it reminded her of someone trying to comfort a child.

Mr. Watson produced his check book and filled out a check, which he handed to Charity. When she saw his notebook and pencil, as he held them awaiting her orders, she said, "It was not to disparage the church that we came to you. We just want you to mention the worthiness of Mrs. Wilson in your paper." He wrote a short notice of what they were trying to do, not mentioning the church in connection with it. Charity thanked him, assuring him that she would not forget his kindness.

Mrs. Huling, thinking it was time for the children to return from school, returned home, leaving Charity to cash the check. On the way home she met Rev. Preston, and explained the whole affair to him, saying that if anyone were to blame, it was Sister Trigsby who, out of selfish reasons, had opposed them from the start. He was much disturbed lest something would appear in the paper concerning it, and said, "What would we do if Sister Trigsby were to leave the church. It would spoil our choir."

When Charity heard what Rev. Preston had said, she was indignant, and felt that he should apologize for accusing her of spite work and creating a scene on the street. She said that if he did not apologize, she would never go to hear him preach again.

Conflicting stories were afloat concerning the affair. One of the elders, hearing of Rev. Preston's actions, said that he must be on the verge of nervous prostration. Some thought that the facts should appear in the Daily News. To this, Charity would not agree. She felt that Rev. Preston would explain the reasons for his accusations, and, on hearing that he was sick, she was sure that he felt as badly as she did

about it; and decided that she would go to his home and ask for an explanation. She found him able to be up, and Sister Preston explained his illness by saying that he had eaten too much at a recent wedding supper.

Charity, knowing that Mrs. Huling had told him the true state of affairs, said, "Brother Preston, I came to ask why you accused me of spite work in the matter of assisting Mrs. Wilson." "I never said anything of the kind," he replied petulantly. Charity was greatly surprised, and began to think the elder was right—Rev. Preston was surely suffering from overwork and worry in trying to raise sufficient money to pay off the mortgage. A wave of pity filled her heart. He continued. "You and Sister Huling did wrong; you had no business to try to do a thing like that in the church.

"I have more weddings and am called upon to preach more funerals than any other minister in town. I came here from a fine church to pay off the mortgage. I knew if I did not, it would never be paid. I love the church—I built it, and when I returned, I found it looking like a negro shanty—I say just like a negro shanty, with that old carpet."

He then told Charity of the work he had done in the way of repairs, which she knew was true. "Do you know, Sister Templeton, that if two hundred and fifty people left the church, it would make no difference?" Charity listened, thinking he must be mad to make such a statement, and did not attempt a reply. "Sister Templeton, when did you join the church?" "During the Updike meeting," she replied. "Yes, and I am even now paying for that meeting," he said, becoming more excited. "Mr. Watson will not print anything about this—he thinks too much of me. You know he didn't take any stock in Carrie Nation."

Charity looked at the minister, and thought to herself, "this is not craziness—it is pure meanness." His whole appearance was that of a spoiled child having a tantrum when refused its wish about anything. Pity was displaced by sternness, as she replied, "Don't deceive yourself; Mr. Watson does not think any more of you than any other minister." His reference to the advocate of the hatchet had aroused all the resentment in her nature. Just then, Mrs. Preston said: "Who is Mr. Watson, anyway? He is the meanest man in this town—he is so mean that he would not be allowed to

live in any other place, but because he edits a paper, he has the whole town under his thumb." Charity could not help admiring the beauty of her brown eyes filled with unspeakable anger, but she replied in a quiet, earnest voice, "I do not know what kind of a man he is, but he has a kind heart, for he gave us ten dollars, and said he would print anything we wished. Is it any worse for a man to have the whole town under his thumb than for one woman to have the whole church under hers?"

Sister Preston's eyes grew large with astonishment. "He gave you ten dollars!" she gasped. For a few minutes, intense stillness prevailed, broken at last by Rev. Preston, saying, as he reached out and took Charity's hand, "Forgive me, I was too hasty. I always was, and have been in trouble many times on account of it." His appearance was that of a lately transplanted flower wilted by the sudden appearance of the sun on a cloudy day. Charity, knowing that others were more to blame for all the trouble than he, instantly forgave him.

Mrs. Preston arose, and, going to Charity, began removing her hat, saying, "You must stay for dinner with us, and we will talk to you as if you were one of our own family, of some of the trials we must endure." For an hour Charity listened as they told of the trials of a minister's family—how they most move from one place to another, never having any permanent home, not forming any friendships like others on account of the petty jealousies in most congregations. Mrs. Preston told her how a preacher's wife was criticized—her personal appearance, her housekeeping, her children's conduct; and she was expected to do more work in the church than other women, though really having less time.

Mrs. Preston told her how a minister must always wear a smiling face, and always be cheerful, no matter how badly he might feel; and many other difficulties encountered by a minister of the Gospel.

As Charity listened, she compared their experiences with the life of joy and peace that heretofore she had always supposed was the common lot of preacher's families. She looked at Mrs. Preston, then at her husband's sorrowful countenance, and could scarcely believe it was the same Brother and Sister Preston that she had been accustomed

to see at church, always with smiling faces. Charity asked this question, "Why do you stay in the ministry?" "Why," replied Brother Preston, "the joy I experience hearing men and women make the good confession compensates me for all the trials connected with the work."

Charity had learned much by this interview, and resolved to ever after be a friend of the minister and his family.

The next day, Charity, worn out with the nervous excitement she had experienced, noticed a number of gray hairs in her head. She knew it was not age, but the worry she had encountered in church work during the past few weeks.

In making his announcements the following Sunday, Rev. Preston said, "There is one more, and that some of you know about. I refer to the effort made by some ladies to help a poor widow. That is a fine thing to do, and I hope you will give liberally when they call upon you. Two of these women are members of our church—Mrs. Huling and Charity Templeton, and"—he seemed to grow taller as he continued—"I am proud of the fact that they are."

There was standing room only that night. Sister Trigsby sat at the organ facing the audience, a look of triumph on her face, which changed to one of mingled astonishment and rage during the announcements. As Rev. Preston finished speaking, she hid her ashen face behind the top of the organ. The President of the Circle shrank nearer the wall, and looked so pale that Charity thought she was going to faint, as Rev. Preston read the text, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

As usual, the audience sat spellbound at the eloquence of his sermon, the closing words of which were: "Pure and undefiled religion before God, the Father, is to visit the widows and orphans in their affliction."

He then asked the choir to sing that beautiful song which we all know and love: "Scatter Sunshine."

The next morning Charity received a call from the President of the Circle. She said there was five dollars in the treasury, which they might give to the widow. Charity advised her to put it with the mortgage funds, as they had decided to raise the money among the business men. She had been appointed to see them, and as she went from place to place, she was made glad by the way they found time to

speak words of sympathy. Each one gave liberally. One merchant took out his pocketbook and gave her every cent it contained. She came to the conclusion that the best men in the world were the business men of Ashton. The sum raised was sufficient to supply the needs of the widow's family for some time.

Charity and Mrs. Huling went to the home of Mrs. Wilson and gave her the money, with the messages of sympathy spoken by the givers.

Mrs. Wilson did not know of their efforts in her behalf, and was greatly surprised. She was moved to tears, and said she wished all could know how thankful she was for their help, and what a load they had lifted from her heart.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASQUERADE PARTY.

Some time had passed since there had been a social affair at the church, so Sister Trigsby suggested, for a change, that they have a surprise party on the pastor, and, to make it more enjoyable, that each one select a costume suitable for the occasion, and make it a masquerade party. For fear of of frightening the children, Mrs. Preston was taken into their confidence.

On the appointed evening, all who were going assembled at the home of Mrs. Macum. Each lady was accompanied by a gentleman—in all, thirty couples. Deacon Howard, with powdered hair and knee breeches, as George Washington, took the lead. His wife dressed as Carrie Nation, and carried a hatchet made of heavy pasteboard, covered with tinfoil.

All started for the home of the pastor. Arriving, they rang the door bell, which was answered by Rev. Preston, who stood speechless until his wife came to the rescue and invited the grotesque visitors to come in. He then realized that he was the victim of a surprise party.

In came Deacon Howard. His wife, on entering the room, made a bee line to the glass bowl containing the gold fish, and raised her hatchet as though she would break it.

Sister Stanley, as Topsy, pretended that she was going to kiss Bro. Scalem, who happened to be at the pastor's house on business, but he beat a retreat upstairs, to the merriment of all present. Her husband dressed as a "dude," and gracefully twirled his cane. Sister Glenn, as Pocahontas, in a gayly colored blanket, and a cap of feathers on her head, assumed a comfortable position on the parlor floor. Her husband's dress indicated that he had recently arrived from the Fatherland.

Brother Van Allen, as Rip Van Winkle, next appeared, his wife dressed in a kimona languidly waving a fan, and her head protected from the beams of the moon by a tiny red umbrella.

When all were seated, they asked the pastor to guess who they were. He was very successful, in spite of the fact that all wore masks, which they removed as their names were called. Finally, all were unmasked except two ladies. He guessed Carrie Nation as Sister Trigsby, much to her disgust, as she was dressed in a plaid suit, with the mask of a beautiful doll face.

Sister Preston served the fruit and cake, which the guests had brought with them, after which such old games as "Hide the Thimble," "Fruit Basket" and "Pussy Wants a Corner" were played.

As the hand of the clock on the mantel pointed the midnight hour, they bade their hosts a pleasant goodnight, after which the pastor and his wife retired to the library, where they sat for a long time discussing the situation then prevailing in the church. Before retiring Rev. Preston decided to accept a call secretly extended to him from a church in Colorado.

The congregation was much surprised and grieved the following Sunday when the pastor told them of his plans. He said that because of an attack of hay fever his resignation would be immediate, as his physician had ordered him to seek a more suitable climate.

CHAPTER VII.

CALLING A NEW PASTOR.

In selecting a new minister, many were asked to preach a trial sermon, and while those who preached did their best, the people seemed unusually hard to please. One stammered, another was too old, and so on. It was not until Silas Holden came, more than three months after Rev. Preston's departure, that they were entirely pleased. After hearing him preach, they declared him to be the very man for them, and immediately extended to him a unanimous call to become their minister.

Silas Holden was a native of Kentucky, and a man with a strong personality radiating goodness, and a smile which one good sister described as "angelic." He had great dark eyes that glowed with love for Christ's work, and his voice, when speaking, possessed the soft Southern drawl, mingled with a ring of determination that spoke of Scottish ancestry.

So pleased were the people with their choice, that the loss of Brother Preston grew less. Rev. Holden's family consisted of a wife and two bright little girls. Preparations were soon on the way for a reception to the new pastor.

The church was beautifully decorated with palms and blooming plants, and each tried to surpass the other in making their welcome a hearty one.

Sister Trigsby managed, with the assistance of her able lieutenants, to see that Charity and Arthur were not placed on any of the committees having the reception in charge; and they were among the last to be introduced to the new pastor and his wife.

The meeting between him and Arthur was like that of brothers long separated. To Charity, he said in his soft, Southern voice, "Sister Templeton, I know I shall like you. Was it not Oliver Wendell Holmes who said, when traveling in a strange land, that his heart leaped with joy when he met someone"—the remainder of the sentence fell on deaf ears, so far as Charity was concerned, for at that moment, Sister Trigsby, who stood near, cast such a look of intense

hatred in Charity's direction as to cause her to forget the words of welcome she had intended to give the new pastor, so she hastily gave way to a late arrival.

As Charity sought Arthur, with a heavy heart, she heard Sister Trigsby say, in relating the happening to her mother, in a voice so filled with scorn that Charity fairly trembled as she thought what the future held in store for her, "Well, did you ever?" "No, never," replied Mrs. Macum, "that means that we must be more careful in the future."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL.

The young people were invited to hold their social meetings at the home of the pastor. While Mrs. Holden was visiting in the South, Rev. Holden was learning the needs of the congregation that had given him such a hearty welcome.

The pastor invited the young people to hold their next ice cream social on his lawn, use the house as a dressing room, and prepare the refreshments in the dining-room. The young people were not used to Southern customs, so there was great excitement, and the news spread rapidly through the congregation.

As it was their first opportunity to visit the pastor's home, they decided to make it more of a reception than social.

The lawn was beautifully lighted by gay Chinese lanterns, and the house, with its electric lights and cut flowers, was very inviting, so before eight o'clock, the lawn was filled with people.

The wives of the elders and deacons, dressed in their silks and "best" white dresses, all wishing to make a favorable impression on the new pastor, who, living an earnest, Christian life, was surprised, but not impressed with their finery as much as they had hoped he would be. However, he proved an ideal host, and made everyone feel perfectly at ease.

Sister Trigsby and her mother, Mrs. Macum, and their friends were there prepared to make such a favorable impression on Rev. Holden as would cause him to think they were the very pillars of the church—in which they were ably assisted by their friends, who were always telling of their devotion to the work.

Sister Trigsby was in charge of everything, including refreshments, and all went merry as a marriage bell, until the arrival of Arthur Templeton, Charity's brother, who was greatly liked by Rev. Holden. Sister Trigsby's spirits rose again when she saw that Charity was not with him, as she had already arranged that Charity should be misrepresented



CHARITY TEMPLETON.

and kept in the background as much as possible; and resolved at this time, she would use all her energy to crowd her out of active work in the church. She well knew that Charity had a winning personality, and was glad she was absent.

"Where is Charity, and why did she not come?" they asked of Arthur, whose devotion to his sister was the subject of much favorable comment among their friends, and attracted even the notice of strangers.

Charity had complained of being very tired as an excuse to Arthur for not going, and, not changing her simple dress, was sitting on the porch of her pretty home, thinking of the nice time the people must be having. When told by her friends of the lovely ice cream and cake they would have, she felt that she could not enjoy it, as she had been made very unhappy by the manner in which Sister Trigsby's friends had treated her. They were much disappointed that the pastor had invited her to sing in the choir, and the fact that Arthur was so well liked was another "thorn in the flesh."

As the evening was very warm, Charity decided to go over to the lawn and eat a dish of ice cream, of which she was very fond, and, thinking that she could slip quietly away without anyone seeing her, she did not change her dress, or re-arrange her hair. On arriving, and seeing the whole church, as it were, she was much embarrassed, and had not the host seen her, she would have returned to her home at once, but he hurried forward to greet her, and assured her that he had missed her.

Charity went to a table where some of her friends were being served, feeling very much out of place in that beautifully dressed throng. She looked at her plain, simple dress of lawn, with its little faded flower of blue, and only one ruffle. It was one she had worn the year before. She resolved to keep in the background, and leave for home soon.

Charity's arrival had been noticed by Mrs. Macum, who lost no time in informing Sister Trigsby.

Charity was taken in charge by Deacon Mason and wife, whom she had known for many years, and taken to the

empty swing, where she was soon deeply interested in describing to them a picture she was painting for their new home. When talking of her work, she did not notice how rapidly time passed. Soon Brother Holden came to tell them to be careful in swinging, as several young people had narrowly escaped being injured when the swing broke earlier in the evening. All three arose and said they had come there as it seemed to be the only place unoccupied, and did not know it was broken. Mrs. Mason said, "I was just saying to Charity, how glad I am that Henry and I joined the church, for he used always to spend his Sundays hunting." Brother Holden was interested on mention of the hunting on Sunday, and ever ready to be helpful to anyone, said he supposed if they would be careful and not swing, they might sit there without danger. Seating himself beside Charity, he began telling Brother Mason of the great harm done by young men hunting and fishing on Sunday. He said that he and his family were very fond of the sport, and spent their vacations camping, hunting and fishing.

Mrs. Mason talked of various "housekeep" things, so interesting to all housekeepers.

Just then, they saw Mrs. Macum pass by. As she paused a moment, they offered her a seat, which she declined and passed on into the dining room, where they could see her talking to Sister Trigsby, whose mouth—always drawn—became an almost invisible line. Poor Charity's heart sank, for she well knew from past experience that she was the object of their conversation.

What should she do? As the others talked on and on, she sat and trembled, fearing to leave, yet wishing to go. She could not be so impolite as to leave in the midst of the pastor's talk on foreign missions. It was a happy moment for her when Deacon Mason arose, and, looking at his watch, remarked that it was time for them to go, as he must be at his office early the next morning. Saying that they had enjoyed the evening very much, and bidding Charity and the pastor good-bye, they departed.

Charity said, "Now, Brother Holden, I must go and see if Arthur is ready to go home," and hurried away so suddenly that he stood for a moment as if paralyzed.

Finding that Arthur was not ready, Charity took a chair

near the porch, and was soon very much interested in the conversation of Mrs. Denton and Mrs. Mills on missions. A returned missionary from China was to give a lecture in the church soon. Just then, the pastor came and seated himself near, saying that he had known the missionary when he was in college, and assured them that a great treat was in store for them.

Charity noticed that Deacon Mills took no part in the conversation, and looked as though he were angry about something. His wife said, "Will is mad, he wants to play 'drop the handkerchief,' but I am not going to let him go out there with all those girls."

Charity could not help noticing the look she gave him, but could not believe that she was in earnest, and said, "Now Sister Mills, you do not really mean it?"

"Yes, I do," Mrs. Mills replied so crossly that Charity, hoping to pour oil on the troubled waters, jokingly said to him, "Never mind, I will try to get her interested in some subject and you just slip off, and she will not notice that you are gone. Now, what is it that she will be the most interested in?"

Mr. Mills said savagely, "You just get her started on foreign missions, and she won't know anything else."

Whereupon Brother Holden looked very uncomfortable, as he was in the midst of an interesting talk on that subject.

Just as Deacon Mills finished speaking, Mrs. Macum came out on the porch, as if she wanted to join them.

Charity arose and offered her chair, saying, "Please take this chair." "No," said Mrs. Macum, "I do not care to sit down," turned and went into the dining room, where Sister Trigsby was still serving cream.

The pastor resumed his talk on missions. Sister Trigsby came running out to the edge of the porch, where she stood looking down on the group, with eyebrows uplifted, and eyes literally ablaze with anger, as if the sight she beheld would surely cause her to explode. Looking straight at the pastor, she said: "Well!"

Charity, spellbound at first by her fierce looks, soon saw—as was her way—the funny side of it, and, forgetting for the moment, the pastor's presence, said, "Oh, we are all here. Do thyself no harm."

Sister Trigsby turned, ran down the hall to the dining room. Charity heard Deacon Mills laugh, and beheld his wife smiling, and then, remembering who was present, she took one look at what appeared to her the most solemn face she had ever seen in all her life. Thinking of his last sermon on "How we should love our neighbors," she would have hidden under the porch if there had been room, and said to herself, "Oh, what he must think of my light answer."

Just then her brother came, saying, "Let's go home."

Charity said, "Good-night, Brother Holden," and hurried down the walk, leaving Arthur to say good-night to the rest.

When he overtook her, he said, "What made you act that way? Didn't you have a nice time? I enjoyed the evening very much."

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

Charity prayed that night that she might know what course to pursue. Should she stay away from church, and avoid the trouble she felt she would meet? This thought came to her—that if she stayed at home she would be a cowardly Christian, and fail in the sight of God.

For the rest of the week she carried a sad, but prayerful heart, as she went about her daily duties.

Sunday morning dawned such a calm, beautiful day that Charity could not refuse to go to church. So, in company with Arthur, was among those who arrived early.

The sermon proved very helpful and put Charity's mind at ease. When Brother Holden finished his sermon, he picked up a poem, and, holding it in his hand, looked over the audience. Sister Trigsby occupied her usual place in the front pew, not far from where Charity was sitting. Charity felt that in some way, the pastor would refer to Sister Trigsby's conduct in his home at the ice cream social.

The pastor often read poetry, and read it well. His roommate at college had been an actor who had given up the stage to take up the Master's work.

Intense stillness prevailed as Brother Holden began to read Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poem, "Two Women."

As he read of the good woman, he seemed to be reading it to Charity alone, to her great surprise.

As he read of the jealous woman, he turned his attention to Sister Trigsby, and his voice and manner of reading left not a doubt in the minds of his hearers that he intended it for her alone. She sat at first, as if she did not understand, then turned half way round, finally turning her back to him, as he finished reading.

The congregation was astonished, for they did not all know of her treatment of Charity, and, when the services closed, there was much whispering, and meaning looks were exchanged by those who knew of the former troubles in the church.

Charity, on her way home, was accused of telling Brother Holden of her troubles with Sister Trigsby. In his first sermon, he had said from the pulpit that no one could tell him his troubles with other members—that he would not hear from anyone.

The people were puzzled. It was plain from his actions that he knew something of the trouble, but what, and how did he know of it?

The next day, one of Sister Trigsby's friends met Charity on the street, and openly accused her of telling her troubles to Brother Holden. She denied it most earnestly, and, with tears in her eyes, went home, resolving to stay there in the future. But what should she say to Arthur in explanation of her conduct? She could not always complain of being tired or ill.

Several days passed, and Charity remained closely at home. Saturday evening one of her dear friends came to tell her that Sister Holden had returned home seriously ill, and none of the church members had called on her, and people were talking about it. A Catholic neighbor was doing all she could to help, as it was hard to find anyone to work for them. Girls earning their own living preferred the office and factory to doing housework.

"It's a shame," said Mrs. Hulings. "I came to see if you would go with me to see her." Charity instantly forgot her own troubles on hearing of the sad condition existing in the pastor's home, and promised to go at once. Thinking the children might like it, she took with her a freshly baked loaf of bread.

On the way, they passed the home of Sister Trigsby, and Mrs. Hulings wondered why she had not been to see them.

On arriving, they found everything in confusion, and Sister Holden very ill. The children—two dear little girls, Helen and Rosemary, age nine and seven—were trying to do the work the best they could.

As Charity passed through the dining room, she saw some stale bread, and a few tomatoes and cucumbers, and was glad that she had thought to bring the bread, feeling sure they would be pleased to find it on the table when they came to prepare supper.

Sister Holden was glad to see them. She felt badly because none of the church people had been in to see them, and praised her Catholic neighbor, saying she could not have gotten along if she had not been so kind.

Charity and her friend were shocked at the great change in Sister Holden. She told them that an operation might be necessary, as the doctor feared she had appendicitis, but at the present she did not have the strength for the ordeal.

Just then, a knock at the door attracted Brother Holden's attention. On opening the door, he beheld Sister Trigsby, all smiles. She greeted all with much friendliness, expressed her sympathy for Mrs. Holden, and said, "Now, Mrs. Hulings, how is your brother's wife?" "You mean my sister?" replied Mrs. Hulings. "Oh, yes, excuse me."

Mrs. Hulings' sister had been ill for many months, living within a block from Sister Trigsby's home, yet she had never called on her, but desired Brother Holden to think that she was interested in all sick people.

Sister Trigsby talked of the class picnic at the park, talked of missions, and expressed great concern for the future of the Sunday school.

Charity and Mrs. Hulings, thinking she had come to help, arose to go home, saying they would call again soon.

On their way home Charity said, "It is too bad our church people are so estranged and thoughtless of their Christian duty. You heard Sister Holden say they had not had a warm meal for a week, and she wanted to get up the next day, as Sunday was Mr. Holden's hard day."

"Poor woman," said Mrs. Hulings, "she can't; she would faint. I wish I could leave the children. I would go and get dinner for them, for someone ought to. Can't you go?"

Charity, thinking of the many times her kindness had made her trouble, said, "I would be glad to go if only you could go with me. It is a strange place, and I would be so lonesome by myself."

They had reached her home, so she bade her friend good-bye, and went into the house. As she hurried her evening meal, she was thinking of the plight of the pastor's family.

The next day promised to be very beautiful, and Charity thought of the large crowd that would assemble at the church, and of Rev. Holden preaching a good sermon, and

greeting them with a smile, although he had not eaten a full, nourishing meal for a whole week.

She resolved to stay away from church, and if no one came to help them, she would get Mrs. Alton, whose husband was away on his vacation, and they would spend the morning cleaning up the house and cooking dinner, feeling that it was their Christian duty to do so.

At nine o'clock she 'phoned, asking how Sister Holden was, and was told that she was not so well as the day before. She asked if anyone had come to help them, and was told that no one had been there. Charity said, "I will bring Sister Alton, and we will stay with Mrs. Holden and get dinner." Brother Holden said they would be so pleased, and would appreciate such kindness on their part very much.

Mrs. Alton was much distressed to hear of their trouble, and was only too glad to help them.

They found Mr. Holden trying to dress the girls, and comb their hair, so they would not be late for Sunday-school. Charity and Mrs. Alton relieved him of that task, and told him not to worry, as they would cook plenty for dinner, and would take the best of care of Mrs. Holden.

Tears came into the pastor's eyes as he thanked them, and started for the church. Those who were present said they never heard a better sermon than the one delivered that morning on home missions.

Mrs. Alton took charge of Mrs. Holden, while Charity swept the parlor and dining room, and the two ladies cooked enough for several meals.

Mrs. Holden was so cheered that she felt much better by the time Rev. Holden and the children returned from church, and they were made very happy by such a fine dinner. Charity had made some of her fine hot biscuits, which pleased them beyond expression; and they were very happy as they sat at the table and listened to Rev. Holden as he thanked the Heavenly Father for sending such kind friends to them, and prayed His richest blessing on them and their loved ones.

CHAPTER X.

LENDING TO THE LORD.

The coming winter promised to be a severe one, which meant much suffering among the poor of Ashton.

The Ashton church had, for years, celebrated the Christmas time by having a Christmas tree and program under the leadership of Sister Trigsby, who deeply resented the plan of Rev. Holden for a giving Christmas. However, the children were delighted, and the parents approved the plan.

Preparations proceeded, under the direction of Rev. Holden, and, for the first time in many years, Sister Trigsby was not invited to preside as Mistress of Ceremonies.

Christmas Eve found the church well filled; the pastor had the rostrum as a place of exhibit for the gifts.

First, came the young men of the church, each carrying a sack of flour on his shoulder, which they deposited on the rostrum.

They were followed by a class of boys, each with a basket of potatoes in one hand, and a live chicken in the other.

Next followed the young ladies and girls who brought some of almost every article found in a modern grocery store. The older women gave fruits and meats.

The outsiders, desiring to join in the good work, asked that an offering be taken, and the jingle of silver told of hearts filled with love for Christ and their fellowman.

Rev. Holden thanked the givers, and the happy faces of the children shone with joy as they talked and thought of the children who would have a brighter Christmas through their efforts.

Committees were appointed to distribute the gifts, and many homes were made happy because of their gifts.

At the annual meeting, Rev. Holden announced that he did not like to preach in a church with a debt on it, and asked that the money on hand be used to pay the sum loaned to them by Mrs. Macum, for which she received good interest.

The congregation voted to have it paid, and the New

Year began with no hint of any unpleasantries in the church. The pastor had just moved into his new home, which was just completed.

But who can fathom the heart of man (or woman)? Sister Trigsby, feeling that she was losing her hold on the people, began to think how she might resume her old time authority. Since the world began, woman has beguiled man. So it was to Elder Roscoe she carried her troubles. He had seen, as chairman of the Board, that special favors were shown her in the way of having her represent the church in its various departments at conventions, with all expenses paid. By having only one delegate, it was a saving of money, and heaping honor on the representative. Elder Roscoe also allowed Sister Trigsby to dictate who should teach in the Sunday School, and finally she attended the meeting of the official Board, to which even the Pastor was not invited.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AWAKENING.

The congregation never knew just when and how the Board decided to ask for the resignation of the pastor, but they believed it to be the outcome of Sister Trigsby's influence over Elder Roscoe, and her attendance at the Board meetings.

A private meeting was held at the shoe store of one of her intimate friends, a member of the Board. It was there agreed to appoint Sister Trigsby a helper to the pastor, and if he refused to accept her assistance that he should be asked to resign at once.

Among other things, they decided that he did not dress well enough, for Sister Mills had been greatly humiliated by meeting him on the street, when in company with some of her friends, and being compelled to introduce such a poorly dressed man as her pastor. One member said that he lately came to church with a straw sticking to the heel of his shoe; he parted his hair in the middle, and drove such a shabby little horse; and really was not just what the church wanted, anyway, although he worked almost day and night in ministering to their needs. They did not think he earned his salary of twelve hundred dollars a year.

Deacon Mills thought that the pastor should be properly humiliated, and should be asked to resign at the close of his sermon the following Sunday.

Elder Cotton had not attended the private meeting, and, on hearing of their plans, was deeply grieved. He said, "Never, while I live, shall such a thing be done. I shall inform him of what you intend to do."

This was the one thing they had dreaded most, being such cowards that each wanted the other to do it—but now the last obstacle was removed.

The past year had been a very busy one for the pastor. Since taking charge of the church, more than four hundred new members had been added. He found ministering to the needs of nine hundred people a great task. Many lived in the country, which made it necessary to take long

drives, for he never refused a call, though many times he was almost ill from weariness.

On the day that Elder Cotton was told of their intentions to ask Rev. Holden to resign, the pastor and his wife were gone to the country, to attend the funeral of an old member. Mrs. Holden, though frail in body, always accompanied her husband. She had a beautiful voice, which she dedicated to the Master's work, and on that day she was to sing a solo. While Rev. Preston ministered, such duties were performed by Sister Trigsby, who now felt that her rights were trampled under foot, for several times Charity had been asked to sing at funerals.

On arriving home from the funeral, Mrs. Holden set a cold supper, for it was late, and the pastor must attend a business meeting.

As Silas Holden neared the church which he served so well, and loved so much, his heart grew lighter, and his body less weary, for he was sure his work was appreciated by the people. He greeted Elder Cotton, who was the only one present, with a cheery smile, and the Elder clasped his hand with more than the usual warmth. His voice trembled, and his eyes filled with tears, as he thought of the blow he must now strike.

It was not until Rev. Holden commented on the non-arrival of the others that the Elder told him of the intended offer of Sister Trigsby's help, and the consequences should he refuse to accept the same.

Silas Holden sat as if turned to stone for several minutes. His mind was unable to grasp the meaning of Elder Cotton's words. The Board not his friends! His people that he had loved and served so faithfully, dissatisfied? Asked to have a woman manage the affairs of the church!

As the full force of the proposition dawned he exclaimed, "*Never!* I can, and *will* resign. No woman can run my business. I will do that myself."

His head sank low, and he groaned as if in mortal agony. No doubt thoughts of his wife entered his mind, and he said, "Oh, how can I ever tell her? It will surely kill her."

After a time, he grew calmer, and thanked Elder Cotton for his kindness in telling him, as well as assuring him that

he would remain his friend through any trouble which might befall him in the future.

As the hour was late when he reached home, Mrs. Holden and the girls had retired, and were sleeping soundly. He thought best not to disturb them, so he went to his study, where he laid his head on the table, and wept bitterly through the long hours of the night.

On awakening the next morning, Mrs. Holden was surprised at the lateness of the hour, and the strange quiet through the house, for it was one of Rev. Holden's habits to arise early, and light the kitchen fire. She arose to dress, feeling a sense of impending trouble.

Finding no fire lighted, Mrs. Holden went to the study, and was greatly alarmed when she found the door locked. Sounds of weeping came to her from inside the study, and her frantic calling of her husband's name brought the girls, whose frightened faces added to her excitement. She begged piteously for him to unlock the door. On seeing him, she grasped a chair for support, so haggard was he after his long vigil.

The girls began to cry, which sight nerved him to tell the cause of his weeping. Fearing for her husband, she scarcely knew what, Mrs. Holden said, to his relief, "Never mind, it is all right, I don't care at all," and, fearing lest he do himself harm, she led him to the couch, where she sat holding his hand, while he wept in agony at the thought of the ingratitude of those whose friendships he had prized so highly.

"Where shall we go?" asked little Rosemary.

Mrs. Holden feared to leave him, and thus it was that Mrs. Cotton found them at noon, not fully dressed, and having no thought of breakfast.

The neighing of Santa, the family driving horse—whose color was not to the liking of some of the women of the church—caused Rev. Holden to forget his sorrow for a time. He went to give the horse his long delayed attention. As he neared the barn, Brownie, the faithful watchdog, came to meet him and showed his almost human sympathy by rubbing his nose on his feet, to show that he understood that his master was troubled.

On entering the stall, Rev. Holden put his arms around

Santa's neck, and said, "Poor fellow, you are not so fine in appearance, but how faithfully you have served me."

Mrs. Huling, hearing that the pastor was going to leave, told Charity, who thought it only an idle rumor. Mrs. Huling said, "It must be true, for Helen told my Florence at school that her papa had been asked to resign, and she did not know where they would go, as they had expected to stay in Ashton, for they had never lived in a town they liked so well."

When Arthur came home that evening, he was very indignant at the way they treated the pastor in return for his faithful work.

Mrs. Alton called on Charity, and told of her visit to the pastor's home, and of their sorrow at having to leave their friends and their new home. Mrs. Holden had told Mrs. Alton "she feared Silas would quit the ministry."

This fact caused Charity to call on the pastor's family. It was a cold, dreary day in January—the time when all are in a somber mood. When Charity rang the door bell, Mrs. Holden answered it, trying to restrain the tears which had been coursing down her cheeks. On seeing Charity, she made no further effort to control her grief. Taking her hand, she said, "How glad I am that it is you. Come in, and talk to Mr. Holden; he is feeling worse than ever today, and I feel so badly I can't say anything to comfort him. I can only cry."

Charity entered the study, where the pastor lay on a couch, too discouraged to arise at her entrance. A sadness overspread his countenance, which told of the sorrow through which he had lately passed. Charity feared for his future, when she saw how changed he was. In appearance, he was as an old man, nearing the end of his work, instead of a man in the zenith of his power.

Charity's heart filled with indignation against his persecutors, but she greeted him as pleasantly as though nothing unpleasant had occurred.

When he expressed his determination to leave the ministry, she said, "Why, how very foolish that would be, Brother Holden! You are not fitted for any other work; you must not think of such a thing." Then she began to talk of the work he had done since coming to Ashton; of the great

meeting, and its results. She reminded him of the new church they were planning to build, and the good work among the poor; of the many nice things she had heard of his work; of the high regard the people of the community held for him for his fearless stand for Temperance.

He was much encouraged, so much so that he arose and ate a hearty dinner.

Mrs. Holden was surprised on hearing him say that he must spend the afternoon in visiting the sick of his congregation. He even smiled his old cheery smile, and his wife told Charity after his departure that she feared he would never smile again. She thanked Charity for her timely visit, saying she would never forget her kindness to them, and that she would always remember it, no matter where they might go.

Many people in the church were justly indignant, at the way the pastor had been treated, and by their stand, gained the ill-will of Sister Trigsby and her friends. Charity and Arthur were among those who openly showed kindness to the pastor's family.

Mr. Holden was offered a pastorate of a fine church in the south, which after prayerful consideration, he decided to accept, for he felt that Sister Trigsby's friends would oppose him in building the much needed new church.

Great was the disappointment of the many people who had hoped that he would remain, and sad indeed were the last few weeks of his ministry among them.

Dear old Sister Barton, who had loved him almost as if he were her own son, sat with Helen on one side and Rosemary on the other, for Mrs. Holden had said that they must remain at home, as some of the ladies who had no children of their own, had said that they misbehaved in the church. While Rev. Holden preached, tears flowed down Sister Barton's cheeks, and the faces of Helen and Rosemary expressed the sorrow they felt on having to leave their little friends.

Silas Holden wept as he beheld them in the pews. In *that* he was as Christlike as in his kindness to the poor. "Did not Christ weep?" said his friends.

Those who heard him resign publicly, gained therefrom a

good idea of the crucifixion, for so worn was Rev. Holden that he leaned on the table while delivering his last sermon, which ended in these words, spoken by Paul of old: "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith," it being the title of the last of a series of sermons for the winter.

Many wept, and tried in vain to urge him to reconsider his resignation. It was with sorrowful hearts that they saw him depart for the Southland. Many who had recently united with the church were so disappointed that they returned to the ways of the world. Others united with other denominations. A general feeling of sadness overshadowed the church except among Sister Trigsby's friends, whose triumphant smiles expressed the joy they felt. Her power over them seemed greater than ever, and some asked the question seriously: "Is she a hypnotist?"

Elder Roscoe led the meetings while the church was without a pastor, while in the choir and various departments, Sister Trigsby resumed her old time authority. Many weak ones now feared to express disapproval of anything she did. Others took a stand openly for the right, saying that a very few should not run the church and mistreat the pastor.

What was the secret of the power Sister Trigsby exercised over certain members of the Board, as well as some in the congregation? They were there seemingly to serve her, and not to serve Christ. Those who did not approve of her rule were made to feel the effect of her power and dislike.

With her little band of followers, Sister Trigsby began the task of finding a new minister. Those who knew of the existing condition, refused to preach a trial sermon, while others flatly refused the place.

The church's future looked dark, when, after several months of fruitless search, a committee was appointed to advertise for a minister, in the hope of finding one who knew nothing of the past history of the church. They succeeded in finding one—Rev. Gideon Batty, who promised to visit them and preach a trial sermon, they to pay all expenses of the trip.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW MINISTER.

Elder Roscoe decided to make no mistake by employing a man on sight. He thought the Board made a mistake in hiring Silas Holden, so he began an investigation of the work and character of the Rev. Gideon Batty. He informed the little band that the results were very satisfactory, and they were much pleased at the thought of having secured a man who knew absolutely nothing of former troubles in the church.

They decided to appoint Sister Trigsby as his assistant pastor, and, fearing Charity's influence, their next step was to have Arthur discharged from the position which he held, in the belief that they would leave town, before the advent of the preacher from the East, to whose coming they looked forward with delight.

At last he came to preach what they were pleased to call his trial sermon. Elder Roscoe, Sister Trigsby and their little band greeted him with such an air of sanctification, and were so attentive that no one not familiar with the church's past history would never believe that but a short time had elapsed since they had driven out a most faithful and devout minister.

Rev. Gideon Batty seemed very reticent as to his plan of future work. He was suffering from a severe cold; this, and what they termed his great modesty, prevented him from telling anything of himself. He informed them that he could not leave his present charge for a month, being under contract for that length of time. They readily signed the contract which he required of them, in which they agreed to keep him until the new church was completed.

Rev. Batty was well pleased with his entertainment, and the enthusiasm of the people in regard to building a new church. All preachers like to have a new church built during their stay, as it is a fine memorial of their work.

After he had returned to his home in the East, they redoubled their efforts to get rid of Charity and Arthur. Mrs. Lester told Charity of their plans, and begged her to leave,

and thus avoid trouble. This, she refused to do, saying that if anyone went it must be some of those who were planning to have her go.

A few weeks later Arthur was informed that his place in the office would be filled by a young lady. He was much disturbed, for he had been highly praised by his employer in the past. Charity recalled what Mrs. Lester had told her, and called on Mr. Bland to learn the reason for her brother's discharge. She was told that Arthur was near-sighted, and refused to wear glasses, as he had been requested to do. This was a great surprise to Charity, but Arthur thought it was because of his friendship to Silas Holden.

Charity tried to cheer Arthur, telling him he would find another position, and all would be well with them yet, for "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

When Celia Denton was to be married in the church, all of the young people were invited, excepting Arthur. Several of Sister Trigsby's friends met him on the street, and asked him if he had been invited to the wedding. He replied that he had not, whereupon they looked at one another, and smiled knowingly.

All this greatly angered Arthur, and he began to remain away from the church services. This caused Charity to think seriously of what Mrs. Lester had told her.

About this time, Arthur received an offer to go West as a traveling secretary, and accepted, leaving Charity all alone. She could not refuse her consent to his going, as the offer held good opportunity for advancement. With a prayer in her heart for his safety, she bade him good-bye, and, returning to her home, she wept as she had not done since the death of her father. She looked at Arthur's favorite books, and empty chair, and felt too lonely to think of eating any supper. How would she ever pass the time? she asked herself. How could she live without Arthur?

Charity tried to read the evening paper, as usual, but her eyes filled afresh with tears, when the first item her eyes met was a personal, telling of his departure. Then she thought of what he would be doing; wondered if he had had his supper, and prayed that the people would be kind to him—her little baby brother



ARTHUR TEMPLETON.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DREAM.

It was long past midnight before Charity thought of retiring, to secure the rest which she so much needed, to help her bear the lonely days to come. When she lay down to rest, tears rolled down her cheeks and dampened her pillow.

At last she fell asleep, and dreamed that she was all alone in such a beautiful country, but she was afraid, for in the distance, a storm cloud was appearing. While she hesitated, her father appeared, extending his arms to her, looking, not old as when he died, but young. Though he did not speak, she knew that she would not have to be alone. At the thought, her heart filled with unspeakable joy, and her troubles were instantly vanished. Next, it seemed that she was in the church, and saw a dark woman, who seemed to be ruler over all the men assembled there, and all were unfriendly to her. The scene changed—the church was filled with men, all strangers to her, and, feeling very much out of place, being the only woman present, she hurried out.

Then, Charity awoke, to find the sun shining brightly, and Mrs. Huling coming up the walk, to whom she told her strange dream, weeping at the recollection of seeing her father so plainly.

Mrs. Huling was much distressed, and tried to comfort her. After a time, Charity calmed herself, and said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and went about her daily duties.

A letter came from Arthur, telling of his position, and the kindness of everyone he had met.

Charity's calm manner thoroughly surprised those who had thought she could not live without Arthur, and the hearts of those who had planned to completely crush her were filled with bitterness toward her.

CHAPTER XIV.

EARTHLY TREASURE.

Before the arrival of Rev. Gideon Batty, Sister Trigsby and her friends decided to give Charity no quarter. They would tell the new minister to beware of her. She was not only vain and worldly minded, but was not strong mentally.

A few days after his arrival, a reception was held in the church to welcome him; and never were such pains taken to appear at their very best. At the appointed hour, Rev. Batty, accompanied by his wife, arrived at the church.

Those present were much surprised at this pompous looking man. In some way, he appeared so different from the man they had hired three months ago. His wife, a quiet, meek-looking little woman, when asked if she liked the town, replied, "Yes, Mr. Batty is very much pleased, and thinks it a fine place."

Mrs. Mills inquired if she would take an active interest in the "Aid Society." "Yes," she said, "I suppose so, but it is just as Mr. Batty says."

Mrs. Batty was a great disappointment to the wives of the elders and deacons, because she depended so much on what her husband said in everything she conversed about. Rev. Batty seemed very independent.

After receiving the members in line with the Elders and Sister Trigsby, he said, "I thank you for your little reception; it is all very nice, and reminds me of a story I once heard. A little boy was once playing in the front yard, when a pretty white kitten appeared. He called 'Kitty, Kitty,' but it paid no attention to him. He went into the house, and returned with a saucer of cream, and again called 'Kitty, Kitty.' This time, he was rewarded, for it came near, and began to lap the cream hungrily, and he gently stroked its silky fur with his hand. For several days, he provided cream, and the kitten was very happy. When the kitten had lost all fear of him, he grew tired of it, and one morning, instead of the cream, which it had grown to expect, he struck it a smart blow with his fist, and said, 'Scat, you hateful thing.'"

"The kitten in the story," said Rev. Batty, "represents a new preacher."

As he spoke, he nodded his head at his wife, as a signal

that he was ready to go home, and departed, leaving them dumb with astonishment. They looked helplessly at each other.

At the beginning of his work with them, Sister Trigsby was duly appointed as a deaconness, or assistant pastor, with a good salary, but it was thought best by those who made the appointment to keep this fact from the members.

On being told of her appointment, Rev. Batty said, "It is all right to have her call on the sick, and look after the poor, but she can't tell me what to do in my work," and with an upward toss of his head, continued: "The woman doesn't live that can boss me."

When Charity came to church, they ignored her, even going so far as refusing to speak to her at the midweek prayer meeting. Yet, they offered long prayers for the heathen in darkest India.

Elder Roscoe would turn his head aside when he met her in the aisle after services.

Mrs. Batty, though very quiet, was quick to see everything that went on in the church. She noticed that Charity always came alone, and that the members did not speak to her. She said nothing, but resolved to make her acquaintance, and treat her with kindness.

The people of Ashton began to remark on the interest Sister Trigsby manifested in visiting the sick, and urging new members to pledge for the current expenses of the church.

Rev. Batty decided to hold a special service for old people, using candles instead of electricity for lighting the church, and to sing old hymns, dispensing with the services of the choir for that evening.

As the hour of service drew near, the church was filled with people, many coming miles in order to be present and hear an old time sermon.

Rev. Batty's face expressed the joy he felt on seeing so many old people with their happy, expectant faces, that in a way made up for the dim light of the tallow candles.

A few minutes before time for the service to begin, the President of the Missionary Society announced to Rev. Batty that they had a short program of several minutes preceding his sermon. He courteously gave his consent.

The President and other members of the Society made five minute talks, during which the audience became very

restless, for they were more interested in hearing the sermon.

Mrs. Mills was last on the program. She held in her hand several closely written pages, and began to read a sketch of the life of some pioneer preacher. The congregation grew more restless, and dismay, mingled with disgust, overspread the countenance of Rev. Batty. Would she ever stop? was the question in every mind. Apparently fascinated by facing such a crowd, she read on and on. It was nine o'clock when she finished. Rev. Batty thanked the people for coming to hear him, saying the sermon by the good sister was so long that there was no time left for him to say anything, as he knew they would not care to stay all night. He then pronounced the benediction.

The following Sunday, the appointment of Sister Trigsby as assistant pastor was made public by the chairman of the official Board. In some way, the facts had leaked out and appeared in the Daily News.

There was great indignation among those who had thought her devotion was prompted by her devotion to the Lord's work. Many of the members expressed their opinion in no mild terms, and the next week, on her regular calls, she found many doors closed in her face.

After several days of such treatment by members at their homes, she called on the pastor, and said she would give up the position. Her decision pleased him very much.

She and her mother bought a notion store, and moved to rooms over it in the business part of the city. When times became dull and business poor with them, her mother expressed a desire to go to her old home in the state of Vermont to spend her last days near the place of her birth. However, being unable to sell the store at a profit, it looked as though she would have to remain in Ashton.

One cold night, the fire bell rang, and, when people rushed out to ascertain the cause of the alarm, they beheld the store of Trigsby & Macum in flames. The building and contents were consumed, in spite of the heroic efforts on the part of the brave firemen.

Their loss was fully covered by insurance, and in a short time they departed to Mrs. Macum's old home in Vermont.

The origin of the fire remained a mystery, and their names

are never mentioned by those who were once their most intimate friends.

After Sister Trigsby gave up the position of assistant pastor, Elder Roscoe began finding fault with Rev. Batty's sermons, and said openly that he was not going to succeed in the work, and endeavored to discourage him by calling at his home, and telling him that his work was not being appreciated by the people—that it pained him deeply to tell him, but that in some way, he did not please the members—in fact, many of them did not like him, and it might be best for him to give up his work on that account.

Rev. Batty listened quietly until Elder Roscoe had finished. Then he said in a calm, even voice, "Well, Brother Roscoe, I am glad that you have come to me in the way you have, for it gives me the opportunity of telling you that a great many people do not like you, either, because of the manner in which you insist in having your own way in everything pertaining to affairs in the church. So, you see that I am in a position to sympathize with you perfectly."

Elder Roscoe's face assumed a sickly hue, as the pastor gave this unexpected information. Without another word, he departed. He was not present at the Sunday morning service, and the Daily News gave the information that he was unable to be at his office, as he was suffering from acute heart disease.

A few days later, he sold his business interests in the city, and invested in stock in a silver mine in Old Mexico, to which place he went to make his home in the future.

There was sorrow among his friends after his departure. Many thought the church was doomed without Sister Trigsby and Elder Roscoe to plan the work formerly done by them and their friends, which was now left undone.

The pastor's wife pleaded with him to give up the work, and go back East, where a fine position as pastor of one of the leading churches had been offered him. The temptation to do so was great, but he had never given up any work in the Lord's vineyard, because he found it difficult, and he would not do so now.

He went to his study, locked the door, and spent many hours in meditation and prayer to God for guidance and strength to go forward with the work in Ashton.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRUMPET CALL.

Preceding the sermon, the following Lord's Day, Rev. Batty announced that a meeting for all the men in the congregation would be held in the auditorium of the church on Thursday evening of that week.

This was something new in Ashton, and great interest was manifested to learn the object of such a meeting. To all questions, Rev. Batty replied: "Come and see."

The auditorium was well filled for the occasion. After a voluntary on the organ by a young man, a quartet sang "The Man of Gallilee."

Perfect order prevailed during the sermon, his subject being the "Manly Man in the Church," in which he made it very plain that men should appreciate the fact that a great responsibility rested on them in bringing men to Christ in Ashton.

There was an ease of manner among the men that was noticeably absent when their wives were present. At the close of the sermon, the minister suggested that a permanent organization be made of all present into a club for work in the church, by men and for men.

All were in favor, and agreed on the name, "The Friendly Men's Brotherhood." In order that all men in the city be reached, a banquet was arranged, to which a musical program was added. Prominent business and professional men were to be invited to address them. A chef was to prepare the banquet, and young men would wait on the guests—all this to be free.

All present joined in singing "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," and when Rev. Batty pronounced the benediction, there was renewed energy in the sound of his voice.

The greetings of the men showed that the seed had fallen on good ground, and a new interest in the work had been created. Many of them, on returning home, found their wives waiting their return, although the hour was late, for curiosity had kept them awake.

On learning of the object of the meeting, the officers of the Ladies' Aid Society were very indignant. Since the departure of Elder Roscoe, the Aid had held no meetings, and they had secretly agreed to give no aid in any project, so long as Gideon Batty remained their pastor. The last official act of the Aid, before disbanding, was to discharge Elder Cotton, who for several years, had served as janitor, renting his home in the suburbs and moving into a cottage near the church, in order to care for it properly. He and his wife did most of the work at night, as he held a responsible position in a wholesale house. One evening, he came home and found his wife in tears. She gave him a letter which had come that afternoon; he took it with trembling hands, and read.

Ashton, April 20th.

Elder Cotton,

Dear Sir:—

This is to inform you that your work is unsatisfactory, and your services are no longer required.

Mrs. Mills, Pres. Ladies' Aid Society.

Mrs. Overton, Secretary.

P. S. The chairman of the Board sanctions this.

The Elder and his wife were almost heartbroken, for they had made many sacrifices in order to care for the church.

On entering the church the next Lord's Day, Mrs. Cotton burst into tears, on seeing that a negro woman had been hired to succeed them.

The day after the men's meeting, Mrs. Mills—upon whom the mantle of authority had fallen after the departure of Sister Trigsby—decided to call a special meeting of the Aid Society. Telephones worked overtime at the homes of the members. News of the coming banquet speedily spread over the town, and was the subject of conversation in office, store and shop.

At the meeting of the Ladies' Aid, the report of its members was that their husbands were simply carried away with the idea of the new brotherhood organization, and loud in their praise of Gideon Batty's lecture. For once, they were unable to stem the tide, so great was the enthusiasm of the men. They decided to adjourn until further notice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BROKEN TOWER.

Mrs. Mills, as leading soprano, and Mrs. Overton, the organist, used their influence with members of the choir, hoping to defeat Rev. Batty in that way. Of late, they had caused him great annoyance by looking in the direction of the clock, as the noon hour drew near, and opening their Hymn Books, as a hint that his sermon was too long.

On the Sunday evening, following the men's meeting, people coming in for the service were astonished to see the choir corner vacant. The sound of suppressed giggling drew their attention to the balcony, where the choir sat in front of an old melodeon, which had been unused for years, save as a hiding place for bats.

Just then, Rev. Batty ascended the stairs leading from the Endeavor room, took his place in the pulpit, turned towards the choir, as a signal of his readiness to begin the service. His look of astonishment on seeing the vacant space left no doubt of the genuineness of his surprise, in the minds of the audience. They saw him grasp the stand for support, and, with a great effort, he restrained the tears that filled his eyes, as, following the gaze of the people, he beheld the smiling faces of his choir.

Grasping the meaning of the move instantly, he recovered his composure, opened his Hymn book, and remarked that a great treat was in store for those present, as a men's choir would furnish the music for the services, "and now," he said, "will those who are to sing kindly take their places," indicating the place with a wave of his hand.

Chairs had to be brought from the Endeavor room to accommodate the men who volunteered to sing. As their voices rose Heavenward, in such old-time songs as "How Firm a Foundation," and "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" the people sat as if entranced.

The minister chose for his text, "He that exalteth himself shall be brought low." Those sitting near the steps

leading to the balcony saw the members of the choir, with downcast faces, quietly slipping into seats in the back pew.

* * * * *

It was many days before the Ashton people stopped talking of the pleasant features of the men's banquet, and many who had heretofore manifested no interest in such things, joined the "Friendly Men's Brotherhood." One man donated stone for the foundation, and the work of building the new church was begun.

Others gave as God had prospered them, in money, and the absence of the old way of giving socials to raise money for church purposes was a relief to the community.

The way of the members of the Friendly Men's Brotherhood, in greeting men in cars and on the streets, with a pleasant word, without the formality of an introduction, pleased the men, and caused many to give generously to the building fund.

In less than a year, the new church was nearing completion, and the relations existing among the men of Ashton were very pleasant.

Mrs. Batty, with other women of the congregation, adopted the plan of serving a dinner at the church every Thursday, to furnish a carpet, and other furniture for the new church. Mrs. Batty was not only a fine cook, but a good worker, and, with Charity as chief assistant, the good meals brought great crowds, and money fairly poured into the treasury.

The enthusiasm and earnestness of the men finally shamed the members of the Aid Society into a state of genuine repentance, and they brought fruits and meats for the dinners, offering their services also.

Even Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Overton grew to respect the minister, and, under the influence of Mrs. Batty, became earnest and helpful Christians.

CHAPTER XVII.

STRANGERS WITHIN THE GATES.

In some way, every man in the Friendly Men's Brotherhood became a Missionary.

One day a strange man on a sight seeing tour entered the leading grocery store of Ashton, which was owned by Orin Barry. This motto, just above the desk of the proprietor, at once attracted his attention: "As you measure to others, so shall it be measured unto you." The Holy Bible lay on the desk.

After Mr. Barry had left off unpacking the box of oranges, he politely greeted the man, who asked why the Bible was on his desk, saying that it was an unusual sight in a grocery store. Mr. Barry answered the man's question thus: "We practice what we preach." He then told the stranger of the work being done in Ashton, by men, for men.

As he talked, Mr. Barry was busy attending to the wants of his customers; "Yes ma'am, that butter is just as fresh and sweet as it can be, if you do not find it so, let us know." He paused long enough to give this assurance to a well dressed old lady. He then gave the man a cordial invitation to attend the mid-week prayer service, should he remain in the city over night. The man went leisurely on down the main street of Ashton. He noticed that the men, though busy at different occupations, greeted each other with a cheery "Good Morning."

Near the entrance of a neat appearing drug store, he paused, for a thirsty feeling overpowered him. Going inside, he was astonished to see hanging just above the soda fountain, in gold letters on black, this neatly framed motto: "Woe unto him who giveth his brother strong drink." The pleasant faced clerk greeted him with, "Good Morning, Brother, what will you have?" He hesitated. "Please give me a glass of iced buttermilk," he replied. As he went out visions of the foaming glasses of beer served at his home town drug store arose before him, and a smile overspread his

countenance as he thought of what the crowd there would say if they knew that he had called for iced buttermilk in a strange town.

Having thus passed away the time while waiting for his train, he returned to the station in a thoughtful frame of mind; he was impressed with the beauty and cleanliness of the streets and the mottoes which were a part of the decorations to be seen in many of the different places of business. Most of all by the friendly greetings he encountered.

Seating himself in a coach, he gazed at the receding city as the train speed on its way. His mind was busy contrasting it with the town where he lived; wouldn't Nancy just like to live in a town like that, he mused. The bright faces of his three boys seemed to haunt him as he thought of the great opportunity of good that life in a clean city like Ashton would be to them, and a great resolve entered his mind. He would, if for no other reason than the hope he had for their future, sell all that he had and make his home in that place.

Hurrying home, he told Nancy and the boys of the beautiful city that was to be their home in the future. The boys were delighted with the idea of moving to a larger place, and in a few months after Mr. Taylor's visit, he purchased a fine home, and with his family came to live in Ashton. It was not long until he and his sons were among the most earnest workers in the Friendly Men's Brotherhood.

Reverend Gideon Batty conceived the idea of forming the young men of the Brotherhood into a separate club; the name "Endless Chain" was adopted by them, for being a part of the original organization, each one being a link to give strength to others, all anchored to Christ who is the source of all strength.

Thus the Endless Chain Club began its work in Ashton of rescuing young men and bringing them to Christ and a better life.

There were in Ashton a few places where liquor was sold, and against these places, members of the club promised to use their influence, and agreed to hold a meeting monthly for that purpose, to which all men of the city were to be invited.

Some good evangelist or noted lecturer was secured for each meeting, and the services were held in a large tent, with

the hope of reaching men who did not attend regular church service.

One evening, as the song of invitation was sung, a young man staggered to the front and tears flowed from his rum reddened eyes as he told of his desire to return to God, and to begin life over again in his service. Several of the young men of the club came and sat near him, whose clear eyes and poise of manner told of lives being spent in the betterment of their fellow men. They assured him of their joy in seeing him take such a stand.

He told them the story of his past life; he had been reared by Christian parents, married a good and beautiful girl, started out in life with a good position and all prospects of a successful life were his.

Some of the men in the shop where he worked drank, always inviting him to join them; this he at first steadfastly refused to do. At last urged by the son of the owner of the shop, who saw no harm in a social glass, he joined them, not wishing to be unpopular with or to lose the good will of the proprietor's son, and with no thought of anything wrong or acquiring the drink habit.

Soon he found himself bound as if by iron chains to an unquenchable thirst, and began to drop into saloons on his way home from his work. This was followed by excuses for going down town in the evenings, telling his wife that important business at the shop demanded his personal attention.

Finally he could not disguise the fact from his wife that he was the victim of strong drink, and great was her sorrow as she saw him going steadily down, spending his earnings for liquor, while she and the children lacked many of life's comforts.

Many days he was unable to recover from the effects of drinking, remaining away from his work for days at a time. This finally caused him to lose his position, which was given to a man who did not drink.

In less than a year from that time, his wife and children returned to her father's home, for, failing to secure work, they often were cold and hungry, and he no longer cared to remain with them, and he became known as the worst drunkard in Ashton.

His wife was so changed in appearance that her friends of other days experienced a shock upon meeting her.

For more than a year his children did not see him. One day, he appeared at the home of his wife's father, and asked to see the children and to talk with his wife. His appearance frightened the children and they hid in the attic and could not be persuaded to come down, saying, "That is not our Papa, that is a boo-goo man tramp." As they looked at his ragged clothes and unshaven face, in their hearts they could not blame the children for their decision. Then he left and went down town and wandered aimlessly down the street, when the singing at the tent caused him to enter, and as he listened to the sermon, memories of his life in the years long ago, brought to his heart a desire to repent.

When he had finished his story, one young man gave him enough money to pay for a bed and a shave, which he so badly needed. Others offered to assist him in securing work. A place was found the next day, and his employer secured a promise from him to attend church.

Charles Parker, president of the club, said, "Now boys, here is a place for real, personal work." Fearing he might again meet temptation, by agreement, they met him each evening as he left his work, and he never suspected that the talkative young man was in reality a body guard. He was invited to join the chorus choir for he was the possessor of a fairly good voice. In three months time, the change in his appearance astonished even the club members; the improvement was so great that they could scarcely take him to be the same man, and indeed he was not.

Rev. Batty, after being told his life's story, presented him with a Bible, and gained a promise that he would read it each night. He proved to be a fine workman, and in a year succeeded in saving enough to provide a home for his wife, who was happy when she learned of his reformation. To his children he was their Papa of long ago; they ran to meet him, and tears trickled down his cheeks as they told him of the boo-goo man tramp who said he wanted to be their Papa, and how their Mamma had cried because he had stayed away so long. As he held them close, he said, "Mamma need not cry any more, for I have a place now and we will be happy."

His wife united with the church and many long remembered the halo of joy that added beauty to her face as she told of what God had done for her through the young men of the Endless Chain Club.

The story was told on the streets next day. When the editor of the Daily News heard it, he expressed doubt of its continuance, and said, "Well, if Benny Bolton can remain sober one more year, I will quit smoking, and will say that the Brotherhood has done a good deed."

Many times had the editor, out of pity for his wife, refused to print items of Benny Bolton's conduct while drinking, therefore people did not express surprise at his opinion as expressed in the Daily News.

The financial problems of the church and clubs were solved by the men giving as God had prospered them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SHORN LAMB.

It was near noon, and the day was hot, such as July only, can produce in a prairie country.

Uriah Bennett drove slowly home from the field where sunrise found him plowing, to the unpainted farm house shaded by cotton-wood trees, where he had lived many years with his sister, Belinda, as his housekeeper; when they were young and did not mind the hard work necessary to prepare the land for cultivation, or the lonely days.

Drought and hot winds prevented them prospering as they had hoped they would in by-gone days. Age in the form of crow foot wrinkles, thinning hair mixed with gray, told of their near approach to the half century mark.

On this particular day, Uriah seemed to be unusually slow in watering and feeding the horses, and Belinda observed, as he started toward the feed lot, that there was a decided stoop in his once broad shoulders. "Guess he is still thinking of that little snip, Cynthia Gordon," she muttered. "Ought to be glad he did not get her with her stuck up ways and city-fied airs." She had never forgiven the girl who had many years before jilted her only brother, causing him to leave his home and seek a strange, new country, in the hope that it might heal the hurt.

Cold milk from the cave back of the house, quenched Uriah's thirst as he sat at the dinner table.

"Belinda, Ed Thornton was at the field today and said that a car-load of orphans from New York City would arrive in Topeka Saturday. I have been thinking for some time that we need some help for the summer work and it is cheap enough, board and clothes, so I told him he could bring me a boy fifteen or sixteen years old. He is going to get a girl to help his wife take care of the children and do the work."

Belinda, thinking of the money it would save, and thinking no one would know if they should get more work out of him than a hired hand, quickly informed him that he did right, and the next day busied herself getting ready the attic

or upper room, filling a tick with straw for the prop bedstead, and an old chair, with an empty box for the oil lamp, made up the list of furniture.

As Belinda surveyed it, she said, "Well, well, beggars can't be choosers, and its precious little time he will spend here except when asleep, so what difference does it make, anyway."

At the supper table, she said, "Now, Uriah, remember no foolishness, because the boy is an orphan we must be careful and not spoil him at first. O dear, I hope he will not get us a Jew boy, for he will have to eat fat bacon."

Sunday evening, Ed Thornton arrived at the Bennett home, with him was a boy of fifteen years, whom he introduced as Henry Linton, of New York City. He was not robust looking or possessed of facial beauty, but bright appearing, and answered the many questions of Uriah and his sister with great politeness. He did justice to the plain meal of bread, milk and butter.

One of the first things Uriah did the next morning was to take him to the melon patch, explaining that he must never enter unless he or Belinda was with him.

Many amusing incidents occurred before the city boy learned to do farm work. As winter came, he milked the cows, fed the stock and chopped wood and gathered the corn. Uriah was not disappointed in the saving of money in getting the fall work done.

To one who had ever had a home, or knew the love of a Father and Mother, the room where Henry slept would have seemed poor, and the life on the farm hard and lonesome. A boy of the slums, he had no recollection of his parents, and to him the room was far ahead of the foul cellar where he lived in winter, more inviting than the stairway where he slept in summer. His only work had been selling papers, in that way he earned a scant living for himself.

The spring time arrived and tender grass began to color the prairie a beautiful green. Henry was allowed to ride the gentle brown pony and herd the cattle on the vacant land on Uriah's farm.

Early in the morning he was awakened by the boo-hoo-hoo of hundreds of prairie chickens, while the "bob white" of the pretty brown quail was as music to his ears. He gazed

in wonder at the beautiful wild flowers that dotted the green prairie, or gazed lovingly at the yellow breasted meadow lark, perched on a tall dead rosin leaf, singing a sweet song to his mate on her nest near by in the tuft of old grass.

Uriah was so pleased with Henry that one day he made him this promise, that he should have Dick, the pony, and a new saddle and bridle for his very own on his twenty-first birthday.

Farm life painted the roses in his cheeks, and tanned his face a dark brown, but the one thing that gave him the most joy was the thought of having Dick for his very own.

Belinda experienced a twinge of jealousy as spring passed into summer, and she noticed Uriah's interest in Henry increasing. "I declare," she said one day, addressing the pet Maltese kitten, "Henry has those same baby looking brown eyes that Cynthia Gordon has. I half way believe that is the reason that Uriah thinks so much of him."

Having expressed her feelings, she proceeded to lock the door. Then she unlocked the old cedar chest that had once belonged to her mother; she drew from its depths an old faded stocking, and emptied the contents—crisp, new bills, into her lap. She touched them tenderly with her toil worn hands. "Just ninety-two dollars; it seems a long time since I began to save." She sat talking to herself and the ever present Maltese kitten. "Next time I take my eggs and butter to town, ought to make it an even hundred."

Her conversation was interrupted by a knock on the side door. She did not attempt to lock the chest or to replace the money. Panic stricken at the thought of any one seeing her money, she hastily stuffed it into the stocking, reached behind the chest for a sack of carpet rags, thrust it to the bottom, jammed the sack out of sight, and hurried to open the door. Henry was waiting on the step. He told her that Mr. Bennett had cut his hand on the mowing scythe, and wanted the arnica, and wanted some rags to bind it up.

Belinda ran to the cave where she kept a sack of worn pillow slips and old linen for such occasions; Henry sat down to await her return.

She went to the field with him and bound up the cut on Uriah's hand, which bled profusely. Henry grew pale at the sight of the blood, and wandered away to a creek near by.

After caring for Uriah's hand, Belinda thought of the hidden money, and started for the house, trying to recall where she had put it, or whether she had locked the chest. The nearer she came to the house, the faster she ran, and thinking that she had put it under the pillow on her bed, a look of real terror came over her face when she found it was not there.

Seeing the open chest and thinking she might be mistaken as to where she had hidden the precious stocking, she searched it without result. Then she remembered that Henry was in the house while she was at the cave. Her thin lips tightened, and she said, "No one else has been here, so he is the thief." She recalled his going away at the sight of Uriah's hand, saying that he felt sick. Now she knew it was an excuse to hide the stocking, and for all any one knew his father might have been a pick-pocket.

She began to think of a plan to get his confession, or maybe he might find a new place to hide it, or he might run away that very night and go back to New York.

When Uriah came home in the evening, she had a raging headache, and tears dimmed her faded blue eyes. Not seeing Henry with him, she said, "Has Henry ran away?" "What ails you, Belinda, the boy is chasing a rabbit down in the pasture," he said.

Then she told him of the loss of the money; his face grew very white and the hand he pressed to his forehead trembled. Circumstances were against Henry, but he could not think him guilty, and suggested that another search be made. Belinda said, "I just know that he saw me through the key hole, and took it while I went to the cave." "Well, well, Belinda, don't lets say anything to him about it to-night."

After a sleepless night, Belinda arose and made ready the morning meal. Henry had risen earlier than usual to feed the horses and milk the cows, thinking to surprise and please Uriah.

It was while at the breakfast table that he noticed Belinda's silence, and Uriah's face wore a troubled expression; this he attributed to the accident of the day before, and he asked Uriah if his hand had pained him during the night, and asking that he be allowed to finish mowing the field of grass.

While Uriah looked at the frank open countenance of the boy opposite him, his eyes grew dim with unshed tears, for he had promised his sister that he would tell Henry of the missing money. Instead he sat with his head bowed until Henry went out. Then Belinda reminded him of his promise.

"Belinda, I can't do it." It was the first time in all his life that he had ever failed to keep a promise made to her.

She was furious. Uriah could only wonder if that awful looking woman was really his sister Belinda. Added to the loss of the money, was a fast growing jealousy of the boy. She left the house and went to the home of the president of the Vigilant League, and to him she told her story of the missing money.

In her anger she colored the facts so much that there was no room for doubt in the mind of the president, and he promised to see that an opportunity was given Henry to confess. Telling Belinda to get Uriah to see a physician about his hand, and assuring her that with a few trusted members he would see Henry that night, he bade her good-bye.

Belinda returned home, and as Uriah's hand was badly swollen, and giving him great pain, it was not a difficult task to persuade him to go to Ashton to consult a surgeon, fearing blood poisoning if he delayed.

On arriving in Ashton, he was informed that the surgeon was out of town, but that he would return in the evening. He decided to await his return, and midnight found him walking home from the lonely station two miles from the farm house.

He wondered if Belinda would be uneasy because of his unexpected delay. "Belinda is not like she used to be. She is surely getting childish," he said. As if in answer to his words, there was a noise in the grass at his feet, a rabbit, awakened at the sound of his voice, lost no time in changing his grassy bed.

When Henry came in from the field and was told that Uriah had gone to see a surgeon, he was greatly distressed, and did not retire as early as usual. At eleven o'clock, the sound of many feet on the stone walk, was followed by a loud knocking on the door. Belinda expressed no surprise

when she answered it, and several men with red handkerchiefs over their faces came in.

Henry was told by Belinda that they came to see him, and his face grew white, his knees trembled, and he dropped in the chair from which he had risen on their entrance. The president informed him of the loss of Miss Bennett's money. He was so taken by surprise that when the leader said, "Young man, where did you hide it?" he opened his mouth to deny it, but no words followed. His tongue and throat seemed parched and dry, as he realized that he was the suspected thief. 'O, if Uriah were only at home, he could tell them that he was honest, never taking even a penny when sent to buy things. While such thoughts formed in his mind, the leader grew impatient. "Come, come, young man, Miss Bennett knows you took the money, hurry up and tell us where it is."

He arose from the chair. The action brought a return of speech, and his voice rang out in denial. "I did not even know that she had any money. I never took it and if Mr. Bennett were here he would tell you that I do not steal." Threats of sending him to jail did not cause him to change his statement. The leader took him by the arm, and with the help of the others, pushed him out of the house. This so frightened him that he could not walk, and he was literally dragged to a cottonwood tree in the pasture, where a rope was fastened around his neck, and again he was asked to tell where the money was. Though half fainting from the terror of the situation, he again asserted his innocence.

"String him up boys," and suiting their actions to the voice of their leader, he was drawn from the ground. A gurgling sound broke the stillness when the rope was loosened from the limb over which it rested, and he fell to the ground, a limp form, where he lay as if dead.

"Jeminy, what if we have more than scared him," said one of the band. Just then a groan from Henry relieved his mind on that particular point. One of them raised the boy to his feet. Realizing the fate in store for him, as the rope remained on his neck, he screamed, "Yes, yes, I will tell you all about it. Only let me go and I will get it in the morning." "All right, boys, take him to the house," said the leader, and

only one remained with Henry, the rest of them silently departing amid the darkness of the night.

The man lectured Henry as he went with him, for the ingratitude to Miss Bennett, who had been good enough to give him a home. On arriving they found Uriah had returned, and his white, drawn face showed that he had been told of the affair by Belinda.

The man said, "Well, he confessed," and Belinda said, "Now you see that I am right, I knew all the time that he took it." Henry went to Uriah's side, saying, "I never took it, I only said I did to get away from them." Uriah patted Henry on the shoulder, saying, "Of course you never, Henry."

Then there was a consultation between Belinda and the man, who said, "I will see that he is landed in jail tomorrow, for circumstantial evidence will convict him all right."

Henry, weak from fright, crept to his bed in the attic to cry himself to sleep, for with other things he must give up Dick, his pretty pony.

CHAPTER XIX.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

A reporter in search of news happened to be near the Ashton Courthouse when the sheriff arrived with a brown eyed boy in charge. He called to the news gatherer as he started towards the jail, "Here is a good item, it is a strange affair." While Henry Linton looked out through the iron bars, the sheriff told the story of his arrest, saying that he was alone in the world, and an orphan, apparently without a friend.

When the story appeared in the Daily News, it touched many hearts in that beautiful city, and soon was a topic of conversation on the streets. The owner and editor of the News was more deeply touched than any one as he thought of the orphan boy. For court was now in session, and the county attorney had said that he would do his best to secure conviction.

Mr. Watson had always contended that boys were usually treated unfairly; he called at the jail to see the unfortunate boy, and was impressed with the frank manner in which Henry Linton told his story. As he listened, he was convinced of the boy's innocence, in the face of circumstances connected with the case.

Though the Bennett farm was in a distant corner of the county, he drove out there to get the story of the Bennett's. Upon his return he was more determined than ever to see that a fair trial was given the orphan boy.

Welman Bailey was a life long friend of the editor, and considered the best lawyer in Ashton. Mr. Watson called at his office with the idea of engaging him to defend the boy, sure of his ever ready sympathy in the case, for Mr. Bailey had been an orphan, and by hard work had won a high place in his profession.

Perhaps it was the recollection of his own boyhood with its long days of hard work on the farm that made the editor's task an easy one. "I do not expect you to do this as a favor to me because of our many years of friendship, but will pay

you well," said Mr. Watson. "Only do your best for the boy."

Welman Bailey was one of the leading men of the Friendly Men's Brotherhood, and now he reminded the editor of the fact by directing his attention to a card above his desk, bearing this sentence. "I was in prison and ye came unto me." Mr. Bailey said, "I will defend that boy free of charge." The editor departed, knowing that Mr. Bailey would prove his assertion.

The same day he called at the jail to see and talk with Henry Linton, who had grown weary of the gaze of curious people who came to look at him. Henry sat with his back to the door, his face covered with his hands, his thoughts busy with the big city far away. Why had he ever come West; again he was saying, "Buy a paper, please," as the people rushed past him on the busy streets of that far away city. He did not hear the key as it grated in the lock, or the door swing on its rusty hinges. Only when the sheriff called his name, and he arose to find himself looking into the sympathetic eyes of Welman Bailey did he again realize his sad condition. The sheriff said, "This man would like to talk with you," and locked the door, and went away, leaving them alone.

"Now by boy, tell me all about this affair, and all about your past life," said Mr. Bailey. When Henry finished his story, he said, "You will need a lawyer to defend you and that is why I came to see you. My name is Welman Bailey, I am a lawyer, and will at once inform the prosecuting attorney that I will defend you free of charge, for I believe from what you tell me, that you are innocent."

A pleased expression replaced the look of sorrow that had been on his face since coming to jail, as Henry said, "I do not know any thing of court or law, but I thank you."

While listening to his story, Welman Bailey noticed his faded overalls, and well worn shoes, and threadbare coat. Bidding Henry a cheery good-bye, he went at once to a clothing store, where he ordered at his own expense, a suit of clothes, hat and shoes for Henry, and placed in one of the pants pockets a brand new five dollar note, and ordered that the package be sent at once to the orphan boy in jail.

After this, he called on the prosecuting attorney, and told him of his intention of defending the accused boy, and succeeded in securing of him a promise of a hearing at the end of the present session of court. With a feeling of having done nothing more than his duty to the orphan boy, Welman Bailey returned to his palatial home; seated in an easy chair in his well filled library, he smoked his after dinner, imported cigar. As he watched the circling rings of smoke rise in the air, his mind was busy with the plea to acquit the orphan boy of theft.

When the time came for the case against Henry Linton to be tried, the large court room was filled to overflowing. Many were deeply interested in the case since Welman Bailey had shown him such kindness. Others were there solely for the purpose of hearing Welman Bailey's plea, for his reputation as an orator was well known.

Henry, neatly dressed, sat beside his counsel, oblivious of the gaze of the crowd of curious and sympathetic people who each day attended the trial.

Belinda Bennett was the main witness, and Uriah sat with bowed head as she told the story of the missing money. In the cross-questioning, Welman Bailey asked, "Why did you not put your money in the bank instead of in your stocking?" She blushing said, "Why it was almost as much company to me as the Maltese kitten."

Mr. Bailey's reply was, "Why you have no idea of mother love, having no children of your own." Her faded blue eyes flashed, as she said, half rising from her chair, "It is none of your business if I haven't." Her answer caused a ripple of laughter, and it was with difficulty that the judge retained his usual gravity of countenance, as he rapped for order. Welman Bailey dismissed the witness without further questioning.

In closing his final argument the county attorney said to the jury: "How can you fail to convict this boy after hearing the testimony of this dear, kindly maiden lady; why I would as soon doubt my own mother as to doubt her." Belinda cast a look at Uriah which said, as plain as words, "What did I tell you."

During his arraignment of the orphan boy, hisses were heard at intervals from different parts of the court room,

and the "Order, order," of the judge did not prevent the feeling of indignation in the hearts of mothers as they clasped their little ones to them in the fear that such a fate might be theirs.

A subdued murmur of applause greeted Welman Bailey when he arose to begin his plea for the accused boy. He painted a word picture of his life in the city, and as he followed the boy's lonely life with its hardships, there was scarcely a dry eye in the audience. Tears gathered in the eyes of several of the jury as in his inimitable way Welman Bailey told them of the great wrong done the boy in accusing him of the crime. A period of intense silence followed the judge's charge as the jury filed out to consider the verdict; few left the room, as it was believed little time would be consumed by the men in arriving at a decision in the case. Almost breathless, they awaited the verdict.

Soon they were rewarded by the return of the jury. The foreman announced that they had rendered a verdict. As the sentence, "Not guilty," was spoken by the foreman, a look of relief came into Uriah's face, but Belinda, in a half fainting condition, had to be removed from the court room by the friends who accompanied her.

Many pressed forward to grasp the hand of Henry Linton, and expressed their joy upon hearing such a favorable verdict. Many compliments were heard on every hand of Welman Bailey for his kindness to an orphan boy, as well as for his oratory.

It was late in the afternoon, the great audience melted away almost as quickly as the last snow of the season before the spring sunshine, and Henry Linton soon found himself alone again, but for the presence of his friend and counsel.

Though acquitted of theft, a shadow hung over his future; this Welman Bailey recognized, and the thought filled his heart with pity for the lonely boy. What was to become of him now?

While all were glad, none offered the much needed help. So Welman Bailey took Henry home with him, and employed him as errand and office boy, and became deeply attached to him as time passed.

There was a certain sadness about Henry, because he had once been in jail, that even the kindness of Welman Bailey and his wife could not dispel.

Several months later the lawyer and his wife were pleased and their hearts overflowed with joy and thanksgiving, for one day Belinda Bennett entertained her friends and neighbors with a rag carpet party, and when the long forgotten sack of rags was brought from its resting place behind the old cedar chest, and the contents emptied and spread out on the floor, to the astonishment of all present, Belinda Bennett gave one piercing scream and fainted, falling on the pile of rags. After much work on the part of those present, she regained her senses, and in answer to the many anxious inquiries, she took the precious old stocking from the rags, where with her own hands she had hidden it long months before, and acknowledged before her guests, her mistake in accusing Henry Linton of stealing the long lost and much talked of money.

Once again Henry Linton's face was lighted by that sweet smile of old. Welman Bailey and his wife decided to adopt him as their own son, for no children had ever come to bless their home.

Another year had rolled around and Benny Bolton, who was once the town drunkard, had remained sober, and was now foreman of the large brick yards, where he had been employed after being rescued by the young men of the Endless Chain club.

It was during a great evangelistic meeting, led by Gypsy Smith, who had been secured by the Friendly Men's Brotherhood to hold a meeting for men, that the editor of the Daily News, after many nights attendance of the meetings, came forward and confessed his belief in God and of man's dependence on him.

It was a time of great rejoicing, and people marveled at the great change in Mr. Watson; some said it was the earnest work of the Friendly Men's Brotherhood, others said it was the reformation of Benny Bolton and power of Christ to save men manifested through Gypsy Smith.

Nothing in all Ashton is such a power for good as the Daily News, whose editor declares that all men owe it to God to help and uplift others.

CHAPTER XX.

"THEY THAT FOLLOW ME."

Charity Templeton was greatly loved by the minister and his wife, not only for her devotion to and work in the church, but because she so strongly reminded them of a daughter who, many years before, had brightened and blessed their home. Her early death was the one great sorrow of their lives. Her great love for the church lingered in their memories, and sometimes, as they looked at Charity, in their own minds, they fancied their own "Little Elizabeth," as she would have appeared, going in and out of the homes of the people, on errands of love and helpfulness.

Their love found a response in Charity's heart, and she felt almost as if in the presence of her own parents, and this feeling was a great comfort in her lonely life.

As the years passed swiftly, and silver threads became more numerous in her shining golden hair, Charity thought more often of Arthur, who was now a prosperous business man in the far West, where he had found a beautiful and loving wife. Such thoughts saddened her heart, and caused her to wish that she, too, had a happy home of her own.

She was aroused from a reverie of this kind one afternoon, by the postman's knock, who handed her a letter, bearing a strange postmark. She opened it, and a feeling of faintness seized her on seeing a check for five thousand dollars in her favor. With growing astonishment, she read:

Silverdale, Nebraska,
September 7th, 19—

Dear Miss Templeton:—

While this check will surprise you very much, it is rightly yours. Many years ago, my father, as manager of your father's business, wrongfully appropriated this sum for his own use. Owing to a fortunate investment in mining stock, I am now a wealthy man, and feel it my duty to see that you are repaid, so please do not thank me.

Very Respectfully,
R. James Henshaw."

When Charity finished reading, she placed the check on her desk, and, kneeling, thanked the Heavenly Father again and again for his loving care over her.

THE END.

